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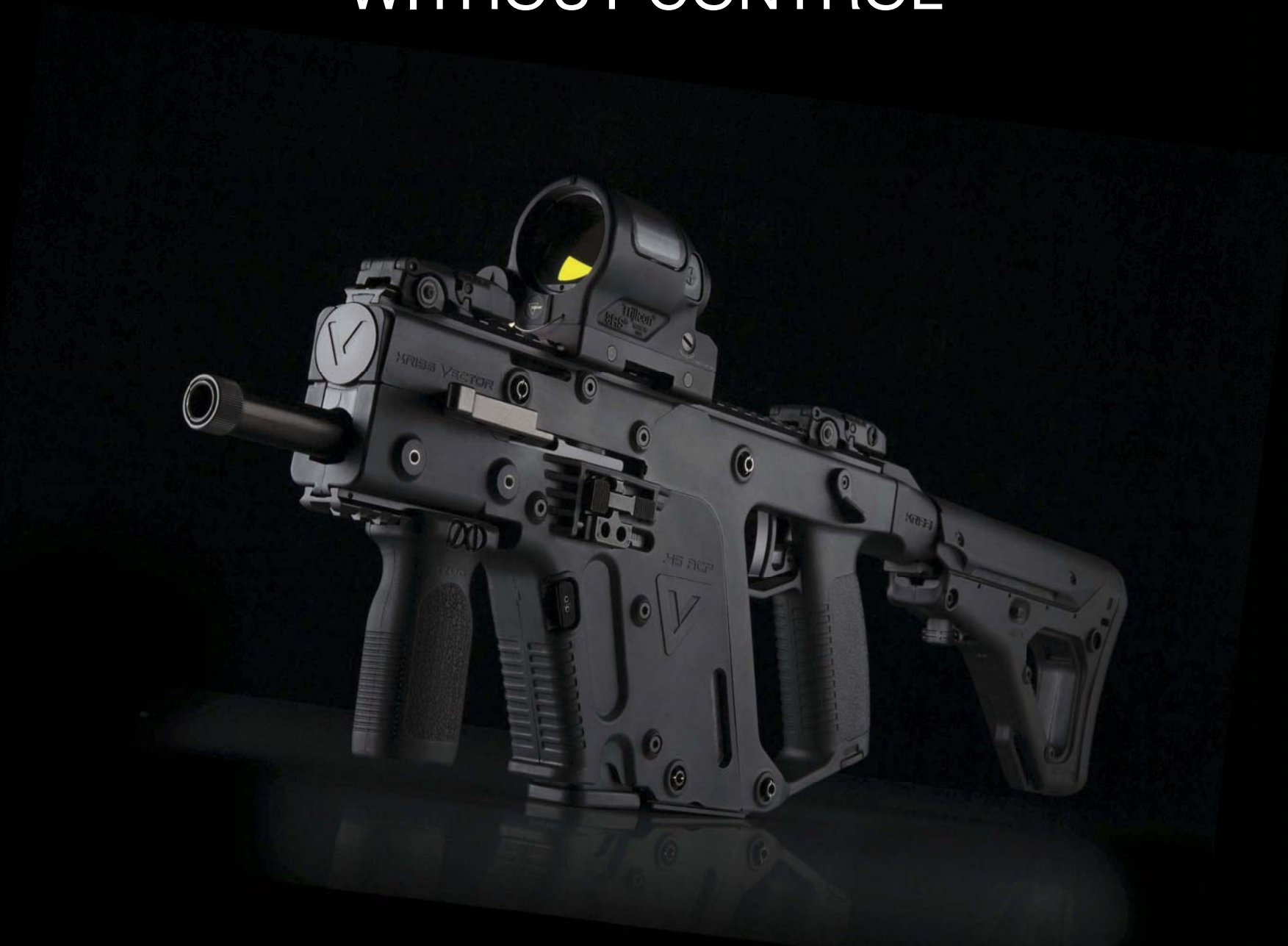

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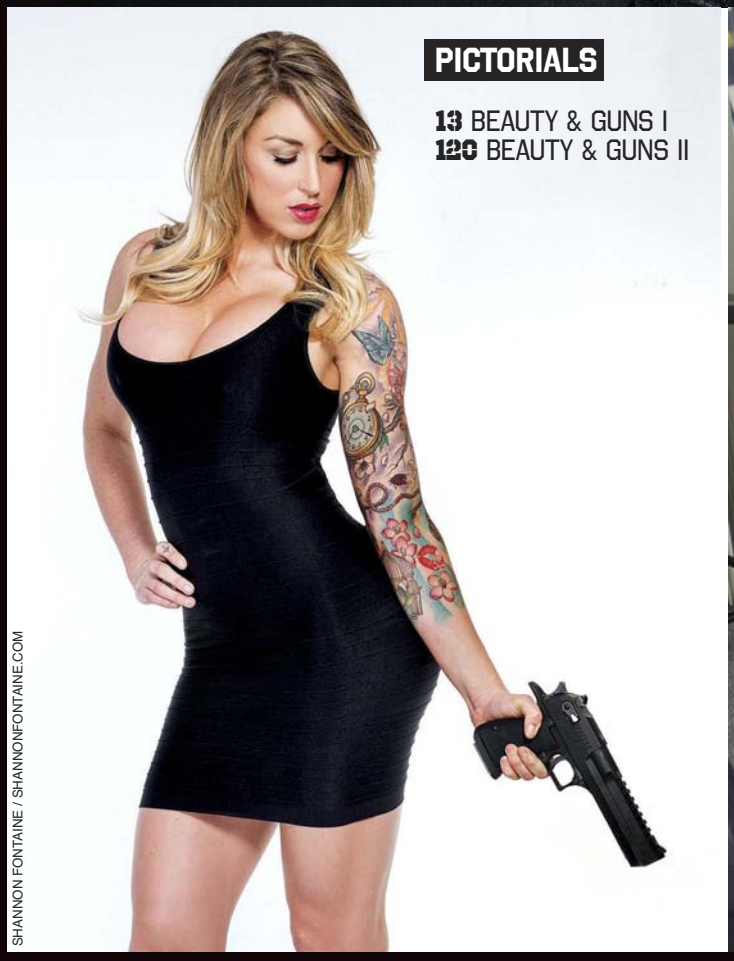

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TED NUGENT / WWW.TEDNUGENT.COM

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PHOTO BY GUS ALONZO

LEFT TO RIGHT, STAFF SGT. ADDISON HALL, CAPT. THOMAS DUDRO, CAPT. JASON CASTER, SGT. ERIC HAMER, LANCE CPL CHRIS ELIFF

RED STORM RISING

By Doug Jeffrey

Our perfect view of the glassy Pacific Ocean was lost in an instant as the Huey banked east and headed for our target area in the rolling hills of Southern California.

As we flew over Interstate 5, I glanced down at the uncharacteristically light traffic on the freeway while listening through the radio to the five-man crew of the UH-1Y. To our northwest, some 200 yards out, an AH-1Z flew alongside. To make sure our photographer saw the Cobra, I tapped his leg and pointed in the bird's direction.

Gus smiled.

With the sunlight working its way through the coastal overcast to the ocean below and the Viper in the foreground, the scene created a photographer's dream. We were some 20 minutes into a training operation called Operation Red Storm Rising, and the nightmare was about to begin for the enemy.

MISSION PREPARATION

As we continued to head east over the chaparral-covered hills with the cool wind rushing by our open doors, the Cobra majestically flew back and forth, taking position on either side of us. As it did, the 20-something-year-old instructor, wearing dark glasses, notified the gunner on my left of the new position, and the gunner acknowledged him with a quick shake of his head. Sitting on an ammo can with his dark face shield down, the gunner on the opposite side quietly peered into the distance, seemingly relaxed but obviously ready.

While engrossed with the activity in front of me and to the side, I still managed to shift my attention and entire body so I could get the pilot's perspective of our destination, as well as steal an unobstructed look at the instrument panels.

Then the command came. We were about ready to engage.

ENGAGE TARGETS

Hands firmly on the GAU-21, the gunner on my side positioned himself as if he were an NFL running back preparing for a blitz from a 265-pound middle linebacker. The gunner with the GAU-17 minigun was poised and ready.

Swooping in hot and fast … the rockets went. Whoosh. Unreal. Then the gunner set the .50 caliber free. My body reverberated from head to toe as the bullets sprayed into the canyon below.

I tried to see the destruction, but it was impossible, as the pilot banked steeply away from the target area, leaving my head spinning. In a matter of seconds, we were out of the hot zone.

The scenario, which was a whirlwind of activity that probably did not exceed 30 seconds, reminded me of a shark attack. We identified our prey, we positioned ourselves, we executed our mission, we were out in what seemed like an instant and we prepared for our next assault.

65 MINUTES

After our last attack, the daylight mission was complete. We headed back, flying directly toward the ocean. Once we hit the surf zone, we turned and flew south. By the time we gently touched down at Pendleton, a little more than an hour had elapsed … each and every minute of which created the most intense, interesting, exhilarating and patriotic 65 minutes I had ever experienced in my life.

Upon review of the mission, the instrument panels surely indicated we were some 2,000 feet above Camp Pendleton flying in a UH-1Y utility helicopter with the U.S. Marines. In reality, however, we were flying high in a majestic machine, with brave and talented men, in a place that could only have been heaven on earth.

Live strong. **FP**

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WORLD OF FIREPOWER

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EDITORIAL
Editor: Doug Jeffrey
Associate Editor: Breanna Armstrong
Consulting Editors: Paul Hantke, USMC retired; Eric Kowal, veteran, military affairs specialist
Contributing Editors: Terrill Hoffman
Managing Editor: Wendy Wilson
Senior Creative Director: Eric Knagg
Business Unit Editorial Director: Erin Masercola

CONTRIBUTORS
Abe Elias, Brad Fitzpatrick, Leroy Thompson, Mike Dickerson, Lee Williams, Patrick Robinson, Paul Granger, Jim Weiss, Mickey Davis, D.K. Pridgen, John Raguso, Stew Smith, Paul Hantke, Carlos Avina, Danny Pritbor, Lindsay Moran, Scott Schanaker, Tim Stetzer, Monty B, Joshua Swanagon, Bret Perchaluk, Chris Winton-Stahle

ADVERTISING
Gabe Frimmel - Ad Sales Director
(714) 200-1930 - GFrimmel@engagedmediainc.com
Casey Clifford - Senior Account Executive
(714) 200-1982
Mark Pack - Senior Account Executive
(714) 200-1939
Gennifer Merriday - Ad Traffic Coordinator

DIRECT MARKETING GROUP
John Bartulin (866) 866-5146 ext. 2746
Paul Caca (866) 866-5146 ext. 4961
Ryan Lauro (866) 866-5146 ext. 2756

OPERATIONS
Gus Alonzo: Newsstand Sales & Marketing Manager
Celia Merriday: Newsstand Analyst
Mohit Patel: Newsstand & Production Analyst
John Cabral: Creative Graphic Designer

EDITORIAL, PRODUCTION & SALES OFFICE
22840 Savi Ranch Parkway, #200
Yorba Linda, CA 92887
Ph: (800) 332-3330
Fax: (800) 249-7761
www.facebook.com/worldoffirepower
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WARRIOR WITH A CAUSE

TO RAISE AWARENESS FOR RETIRED VETS WHO ARE STRUGGLING, A FORMER MARINE IS WALKING ACROSS THE COUNTRY

▶ BY DOUG JEFFREY / PHOTO: COURTESY OF SCOTT WHISLER

■ Accompanied by two friends and Windy Sue and Dr. Pepper, Scott Whisler (center) takes off on his cross-country journey.

DEPARTURE SITE: WASHINGTON STATE. DESTINATION: THE U.S. CAPITOL IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

This journey will cover some 3,200 miles, require about 160 days and accomplish one enormous goal. And Scott Whisler will undertake this entire odyssey on foot.

To raise awareness for veterans who are struggling to transition back to civilian life, the former 0311 infantry rifleman and an 8152 Marine Security Force Guard departed the Washington State Capitol steps in Olympia, Washington, and began the long trek toward the U.S. Capitol steps on Jan. 17. Accompanied by his two dogs, the 26-year-old will be making several stops along the way, including VA hospitals, veteran memorials and other places where he can interact with supporters.

"All veterans face issues when transitioning out of the military," he says. "While most get the help they need, there are far too many that do not. While the war we fought in may be over, we now face a war on statistics that we cannot fight on our own. As veterans, we need our brothers and sisters for support, and this journey serves to show just how many of us are there for each other and how far we are willing to go to be there in their time of need."

SUPPORT SQUAD

Behind the scenes there will be a team rallying community support to meet him as he walks through towns and cities. His team will be in constant contact with him along the way, providing social media updates, supplies and encouragement.

The team challenges everyone to walk with Whisler so everyone can help spread awareness about the issues veterans face.

"Awareness is the achievable goal, but change is the primary objective," says Whisler. "Most veterans receive better assistance and care from a nonprofit run by veterans than they do from the government they served. By bringing awareness to our issues I believe we can spark that change."

Whisler says the walk is their call to action.

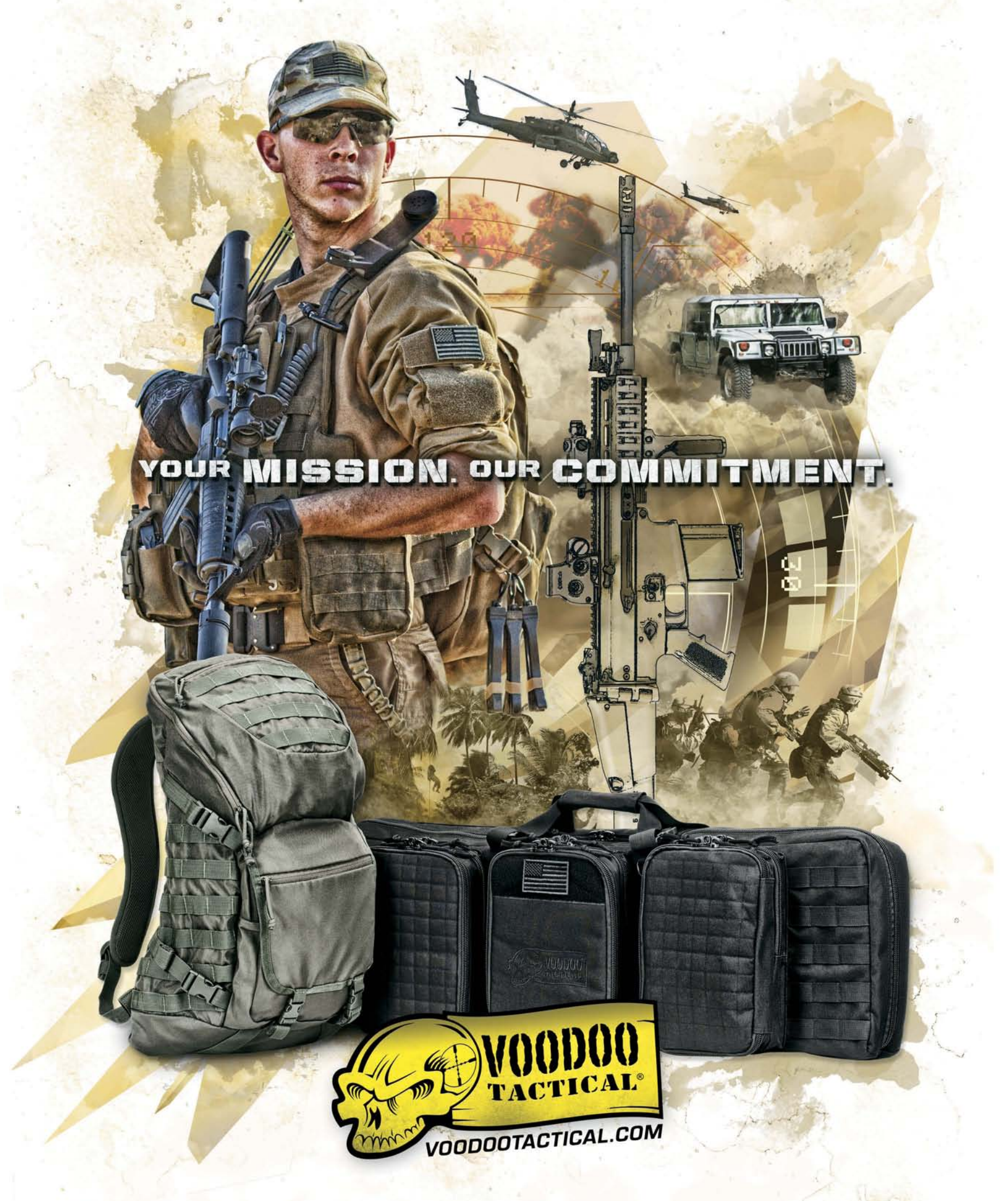
"The title 'Walk With A Warrior' is more than just a catchy name," he says. "It's our call to action. I want people to join me on this journey and would love to have a company-size element alongside me as we march into D.C. We are calling on people to donate to organizations like RallyPoint/6 that provide specific resources to those who need it most."

Few men would consider such an undertaking and even fewer have the ability to pull it off, but Scott Whisler is one who can. And he will. **FP**

"MOST VETERANS RECEIVE BETTER ASSISTANCE AND CARE FROM A NONPROFIT RUN BY VETERANS THAN THEY DO FROM THE GOVERNMENT THEY SERVED."

The 5 W's

WHO Scott Whisler
WHAT Raise awareness of the hardships vets face as they leave the military
WHERE Coast to coast
WHEN The journey began at 9 a.m. Jan. 17
WHY To help brothers and sisters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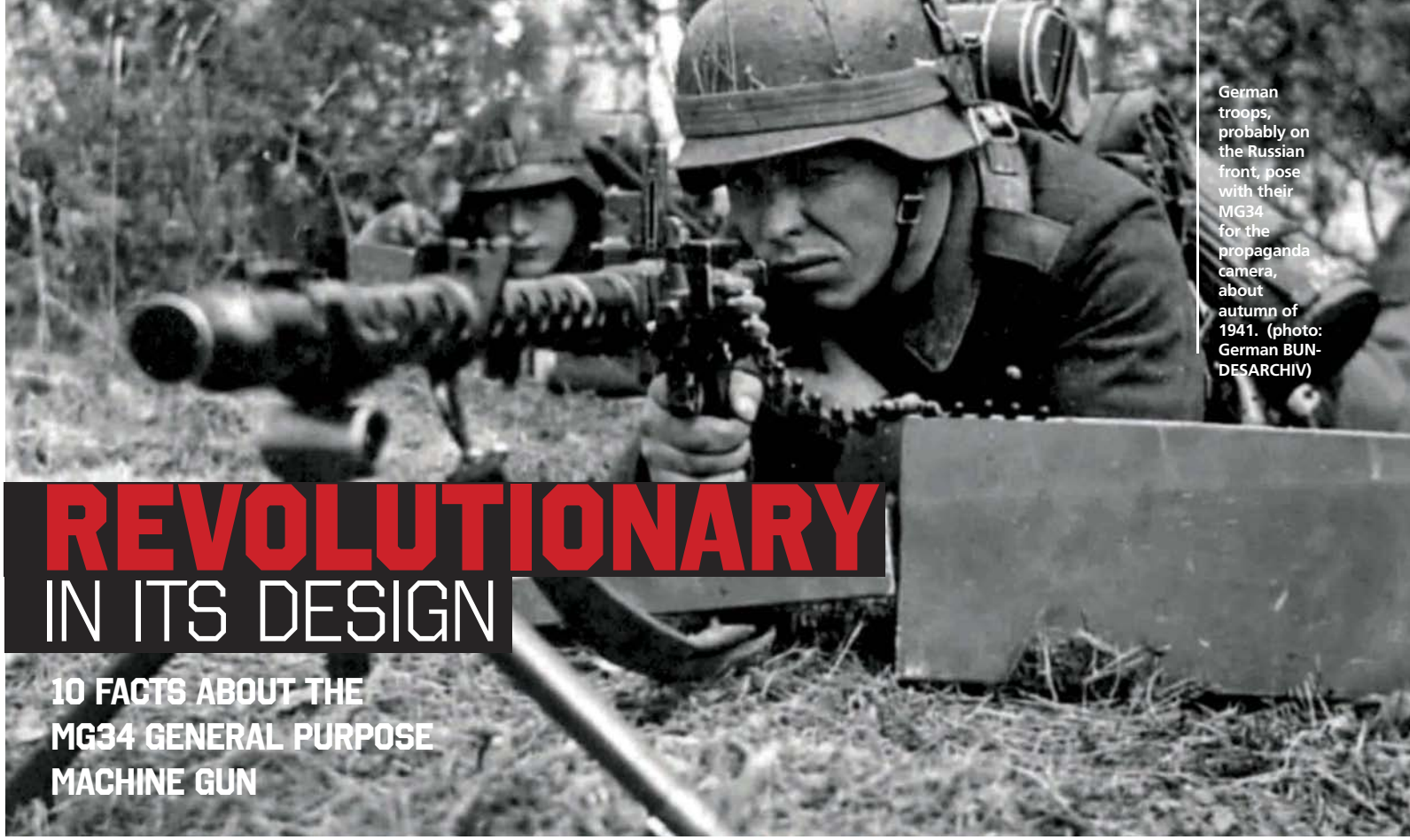

German troops, probably on the Russian front, pose with their MG34 for the propaganda camera, about autumn of 1941. (photo: German BUNDESARCHIV)

REVOLUTIONARY IN ITS DESIGN

10 FACTS ABOUT THE MG34 GENERAL PURPOSE MACHINE GUN

BY JIM THOMPSON

THE MG34 WAS REVOLUTIONARY IN THAT IT WAS THE WORLD'S FIRST GENERAL PURPOSE MACHINE GUN, BUT THE HARDWARE ITSELF WAS THE RESULT OF THE EVOLUTION OF LIGHT MACHINE GUNS.

Like much other German weaponry of the period (early 1930s), the prohibitions of the Treaty of Versailles sped up the process while the manufacture of the sturdy, reliable "Devil's Paintbrush," the heavy Maxim in its MG08 form, was specifically restricted.

Something lighter and more versatile, especially if it also proved to be less expensive, was the subject of experimentation and development before the ink was even dry on the Treaty. Following is a look at 10 quick facts about the air-cooled machine gun that was introduced in 1934.

FACT 1
INSPIRED BY THE MG30

Spun off a 1930 Rheinmetall design actually produced as the MG30 by Switzerland and Austria, Mauser personnel, and most especially Heinrich Vollmer, refined the feed mechanism of the gas-boosted short recoil design to slickly accept both magazines and belts.

General purpose machine guns, even today, are those which are of a high order of mobility, capable of using magazines or similar feed devices while being operated by one soldier, usually crew-served in fixed or "support"/defensive positions. The German term is "einheitsmaschinegewehr."

FACT 2
THE MOUNTS

The various mounts designed for the new weapon were part of the versatility of its manifold assignments.

The Lafette 34 support tripod and Dreibein anti-aircraft mountings were only the two most obvious of more than a dozen setups, many for multiple or vehicular installations. A few were produced for special assignments in aluminum.

FACT 3
THE 34'S INFLUENCE

The MG81 aircraft gun evolved from the '34. Uniquely, on early guns, a double-crescent trigger controlled fire mode. Lower pressure provided fully automatic fire at 800 to about 900 rpm, the upper arc allowing single, semi-automatic rounds. This feature was discarded on vehicle weapons rather early, by late 1940, even on weapons for infantry.

FACT 4
FAST BARREL CHANGES

Like all support machine guns, a barrel change was quick, as it involved a release latch. Plus, the barrel was only slightly heavier than those on light guns because there was no water-cooling capability. To avoid overheating during sustained fire, it was critical to easily replace the barrels.

During a barrel change, the operator would disengage the latch that secured the receiver to the barrel sleeve. The entire receiver section was then pivoted off to the right on its latitudinal axis, allowing the operator to pull the barrel out the back of the sleeve. A new barrel would then be slid in the back of the sleeve, the receiver rotated back in line with the barrel sleeve and relatched. Headspace did not require re-adjustment. This process takes far less time to do than to describe.

KEY NUMBERS

1929: The year the gun was first tested

1934: The year of formal adoption

1936-1945: The years the German army officially used it

1950s: The decade the machine gun was used in the Suez crisis

1960s: The last decade the gun was used

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FACT 5
USE IN ARMORED VEHICLES

Narrow in cross section, the weapon was set up for the close confines of armored vehicles. For this reason, the gun continued in production long after it had been almost entirely superceded in the front line infantry assignments.

The barrel change also consumed less space than the '42, whose barrel bearing had to be swung to the right, and which could not even be reached in most turret blisters. Vehicle MG34's in tanks did not use the buttstock at all and usually had no integral sights, using those on or adjacent to the mountings.

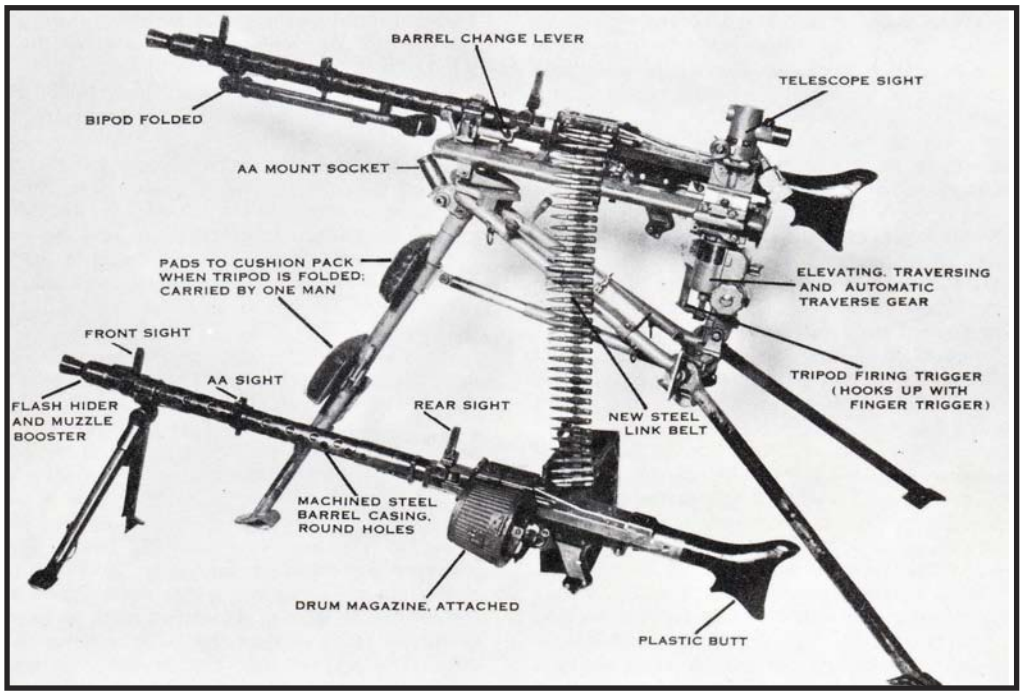
FACT 6
THE RECOIL SYSTEM

The rotating bolt short recoil system was precise, boosted by a gas collar at the jacket's muzzle position.

FACT 7
COST AND JAMS

It was the gun's precision and attendant cost that led to its replacement. Of sturdy milled parts and especially tender, tight tolerances, the MG34 was estimated by Rheinmetall's 1938 report to require the input of 49 kg (108 pounds) of high-quality ordnance steels for the gun alone, and the cost was as high as most versions of the old Maxim.

Moreover, tolerances were extremely tight so when the gun was chambered it could jam, which became annoying and dangerous in the Eastern Steppes and North African desert, leading to development of the MG42 as a de facto replacement before the end of 1941.



FACT 8
BLOODIED IN BATTLE

MG34s were blooded in the Spanish Civil War from 1936 forward, and refurbished MG34s were regarded as primary armament for some armies as late as the Suez crises of the 1950s.

FACT 9
FEED SYSTEMS

Indeed, some manufacturers produced barrels for them in 7.62x51 NATO as recently as the 1960s, and some European armories probably still contain "update" kits to allow the MG34 to struggle along with U.S.-style disintegrating link belts. But through its life, the 50-round belt and 75-round saddle drum remained the building blocks of its feed system.

FACT 10
ITS INFLUENCE

The MG34 was a brilliant but too precise design, and it was that precision which made it the object of many crude and obscene jokes in Israeli Kibbutz's as recently as the 1967 war. All the same, it was the inspiration for many great designs to follow. **FP**

Jim Thompson is an internationally published firearms writer, photographer and consultant with more than five continuous decades of experience as a serious collector and shooter.

QUICK SPECS

WEIGHT (EMPTY, OFF STANDARD MOUNT): 12.1 kg (26.7 pounds), Dreibein 34 AA mount steel version (14.9 pounds), LaFette 34 standard ground tripod (42+ pounds)

USUAL SUPPORT DEPLOYED WEIGHT: Base unit 68.7 pounds, depending on accessories

BASE WEIGHT OF VEHICULAR VERSION (WITH CORRECT HEAVY BARREL): Approximately 27.8 pounds

LENGTH: 1,219 mm (48.0 in)

BARREL LENGTH: 627 mm (24.7 inches)

CARTRIDGE: 7.92×57mm Mauser

ACTION: Open bolt, recoil-operated, rotating bolt

RATE OF FIRE: 800–900 rounds/min (standard)

EARLY VERSIONS: 600–1,000 rounds/min selectable on pistol grip

MG 34 "S": 1,700 rounds/min. (prototype)

MG 34/41: 1,200 rounds/min. (prototype)

MUZZLE VELOCITY: 762 m/s (2,500 ft/s)

EFFECTIVE FIRING RANGE: 1200+ meters

FEED SYSTEM: 50/250-round belts, 50-round drum, or 75-round saddle drum magazine/belt container

SIGHTS: Iron sights calibrated to 2,000 meters in 100-meter increments.

A standard, fairly early MG34 in light configuration on museum display. This photo is from Sweden's ARMEEMUSEUM in Oestermolm, Stockholm.

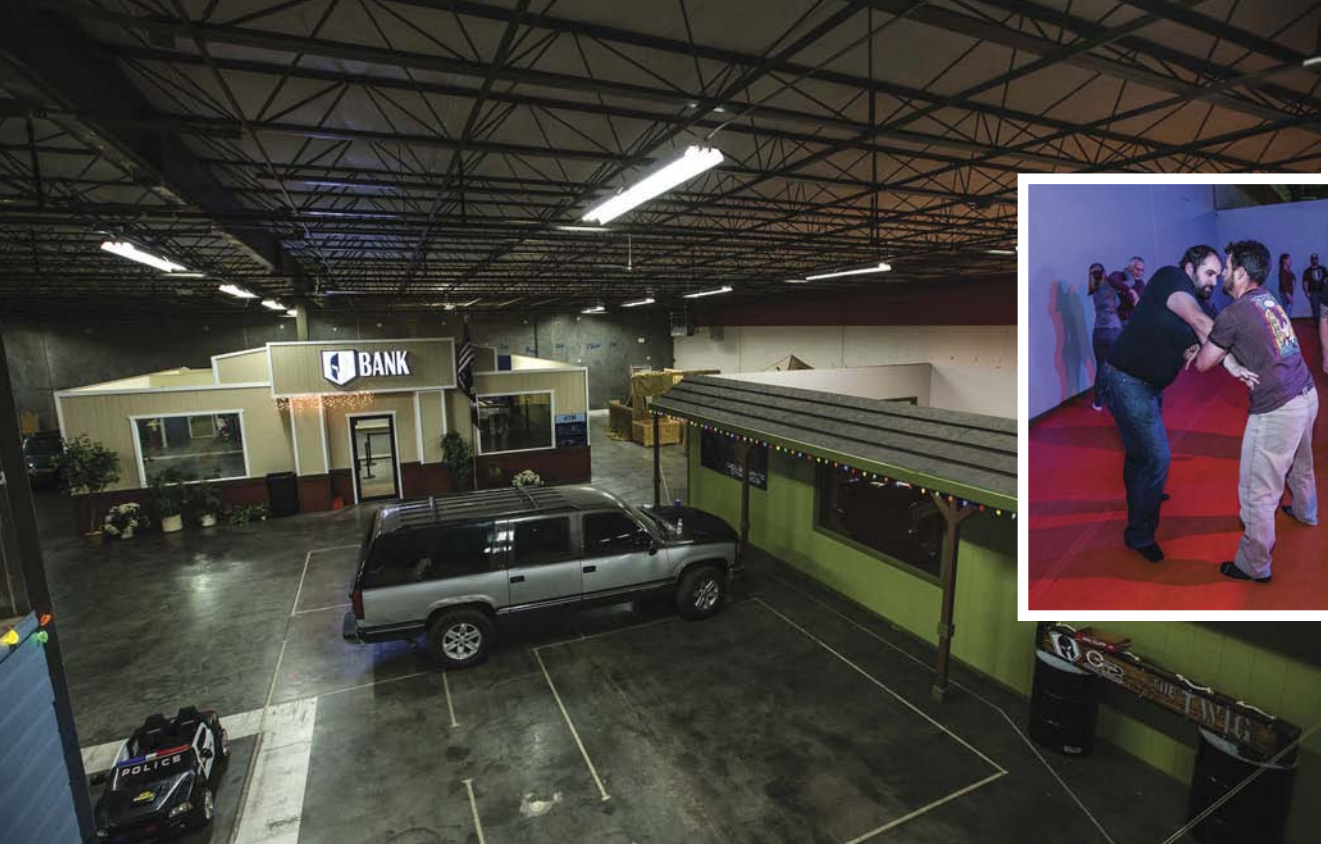
AND ON THAT CHEEK,
AND O'ER THAT BROW,
SO SOFT, SO CALM,
YET ELOQUENT …
—LORD BYRON

THE MODEL
Stephanie LeBeau

STYLIST
Teri Reid

THE GUN
SHOTGUN: Saiga 12 with a 25-round drum, flash suppressor, slide fire, Picatinny quad rail, a red dot holographic sight, and a SureFire tactical light

PHOTOGRAPHY
Shannon Fontaine
ShannonFontaine.com



Defensive Dynamics' force-on-force course was designed to open students' eyes to the reality of violent armed encounters.

WAY OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

FORCE-ON-FORCE TRAINING PUSHES YOUR LIMITS SO YOU CAN FUNCTION UNDER HIGH DURESS

BY DANNY "GATOR" PRITBOR / PHOTOS BY JESSE CLEMENTS

IT HAPPENS TO ALL OF US.

WE GET TO A POINT IN OUR TRAINING WHERE PERFORMANCE LEVELS PLATEAU AND THINGS GET A BIT STAGNANT. WE SEARCH FOR THE NEXT BEST THING, BUT FOR THE MOST PART WE STAY IN THE RUT FOR A WHILE. IF YOU ARE IN THE RUT, THEN THIS ONE IS FOR YOU.

Recently, I had an opportunity to travel to Forward Movement Training Center located in Boise, Idaho, to assist Deliberate Dynamics with a force-on-force program focusing on defensive combatives and basic low light operations.

Training courses provided by Deliberate Dynamics are unique, as they bring together a select group of subject matter experts from various skillsets. The D.D.I. Cadre comes from either military or police special operations (sometimes both). Along with military and law enforcement, Cadre members have served numerous years working for the U.S. government conducting high-threat mobile operations worldwide. Many are still operational, serving as part-time trainers while on rotation home, ensuring students are getting the best, most up-to-date information available on the open market.

This short course was designed to push students out of their comfort zone and open their eyes to the reality of violent armed encounters. The objective showcased some of the extended course offerings, such as medical, defensive combatives and low light firearms programs.

For More Info

WHO Deliberate Dynamics
WEB www.DeliberateDynamics.com
EMAIL info@deliberate-dynamics
PHONE 801-783-3517

CONTACTS
Deliberate Dynamics, Utah: Jim Staley
Deliberate Dynamics, Idaho: Craig McCarroll

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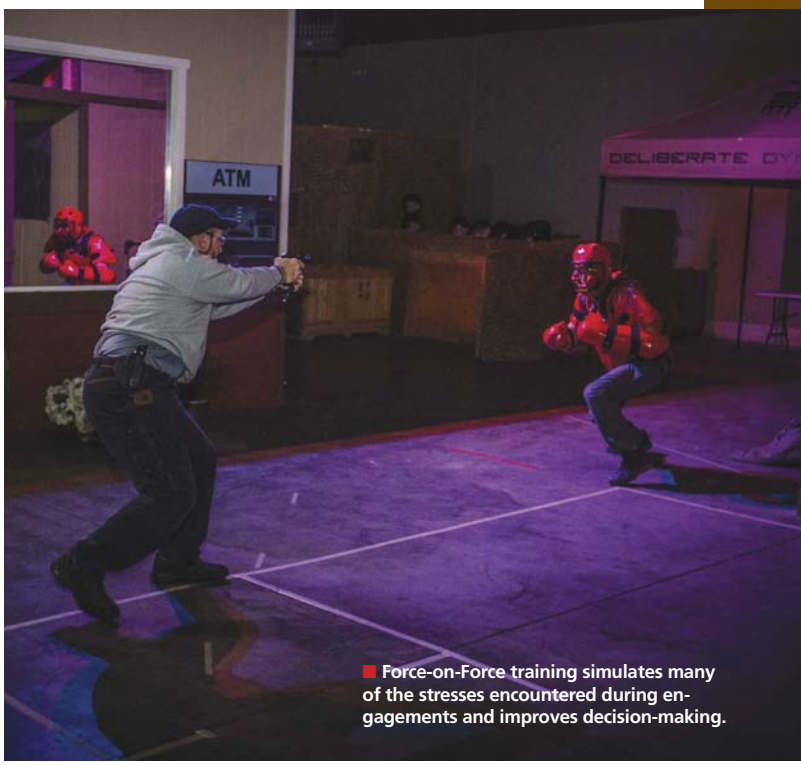


Force-on-Force training simulates many of the stresses encountered during engagements and improves decision-making.

Force-on-Force training builds combat mindset, which includes fighting through the pain.

"IT IS OFTEN SAID PAIN IS THE ULTIMATE TEACHER. THE FEAR OF DEATH OR GREAT BODILY HARM WILL GREATLY AFFECT PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES. THEREFORE, WE MUST TRAIN TO OVERCOME THE INSTINCT OF FEAR."

Dig Deeper
WHO Forward Movement Training Center
OWNER Matt Schneider
WEB www.ForwardMovementTraining.com

GAME CHANGER

For those seeking to excel past range drills and exercises, this is a game changer. It is often said pain is the ultimate teacher. The fear of death or great bodily harm will greatly affect performance outcomes. Therefore, we must train to overcome the instinct of fear.

When we train with firearms, it is a progression: learn basic movement patterns and fundamentals, repeat the cycle, gain speed and improve times. The cycle is repeated over and over. What is accomplished is validation of manipulation and marksmanship skills, and it becomes the extent of training. This is the equivalent of a fighter hitting a bag and shadow boxing. Most will never step into the ring with another fighter. The ring, or force on force (FOF), is where skills are put into action and tested.

The learning curve is steep, as it does not take long to correct infractions after you are hit a few times. Force-on-force training is the closest a teacher can take a student to the real thing without loss of life. Many fear-based reactions during real world encounters are the same in FOF. Let's face it; if we are to understand how to operate at this level, we need to train to a point of realism.

The purpose of FOF is to reasonably simulate many of the stresses—timing and difficulties associated with defensive and offensive small arms conflicts—as well as improve decision-making.

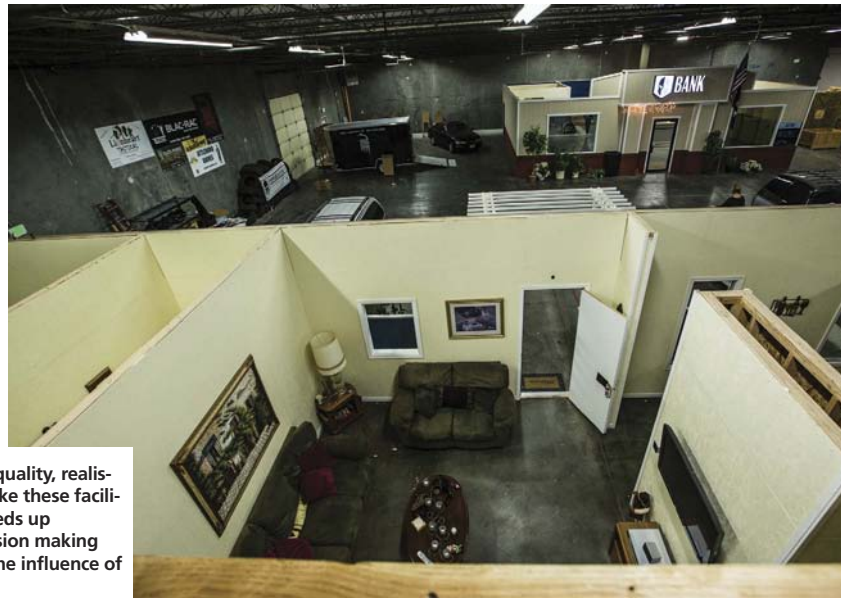
Quality scenarios create levels of stress to challenge the decision making process. Through repetition, it facilitates and speeds up "correct" decision making while under the influence of adrenaline produced by the adrenal medulla during SNS activation (see the sidebar).

Rather than being overwhelmed by a situation, the brain adapts and learns how to operate under this type of stress. It will build reference pathways and firing solutions to quickly cycle you to a decision.

FOF permits us to hone in on principle-based training, such as staying calm under extreme duress, understanding and maintaining proper distance during an engagement and maintaining control of your breathing.

It clearly reveals critical errors not apparent or readily observable with other training methods. It is training at a difficult level, against targets that think, move and shoot back. You are training with others who

"IT IS TRAINING AT A DIFFICULT LEVEL, AGAINST TARGETS THAT THINK, MOVE AND SHOOT BACK."



Training in quality, realistic scenarios like these facilitates and speeds up "correct" decision making while under the influence of adrenaline.

For Better Results

Training evolutions should be video recorded to aid in the learning process as well as show the adaptation and progression.

It is easy to walk away feeling defeated after difficult scenarios. So progression is key – take the "crawl, walk, and run" approach.

When you have a clear grasp on the fundamentals, you are ready to step into the arena to vet what you have learned. Seek out reputable training programs with professionals who are doing or have done the work.

The Safety Factor

With any firearms training, safety is paramount.

There needs to be adequate instructor to student ratios. Fail-safe terms and commands need to be established so that the student is able to call a stop to training for any reason.

All participants are briefed to repeat commands to start or stop the exercise. This will ensure that all involved in the exercise hear the commands.

The FOF training equipment used for this program was Ultimate Training Munitions (UTM), Man-Marker cartridges with conversions for the Glock 17 handguns.

Students and instructors adhered to strict safety protocols with regard to no live weapons in the training area. Appropriate face protection and safety equipment was used during all training evolutions.

Inside Force-On-Force Training

Quality FOF training incorporates the activation of the sympathetic nervous system (S.N.S.) through the fear of two things:

1 Stress (duress)

2 Pain or Fear of Pain

In real world engagements, the above two elements are present, as well as fear of death and the fear of serious physical injury.

Quality FOF training taps into #1 and #2.

have the same or more knowledge and skill, increasing the learning curve.

Another huge benefit is building combat mindset, which includes learning to fight through the pain. Taking hits and remaining calm in the fight is something that needs to be programmed. Many times I see students on their first FOF evolutions take a hit and scream out, "I am hit," and they act as if the fight is over. After a few evolutions, the initial shock of being hit subsides and students are able to continue on in the fight. Whether you are in law enforcement, military or a legally armed citizen, train to stay in the fight and never give up.

As mentioned in my previous articles, which have run in Engaged Media's Tactical Training, the pillars that support the operator or defensive minded citizen are:

- Mindset
- Physical skills and conditioning
- Tactics, a.k.a. skillset
- Equipment

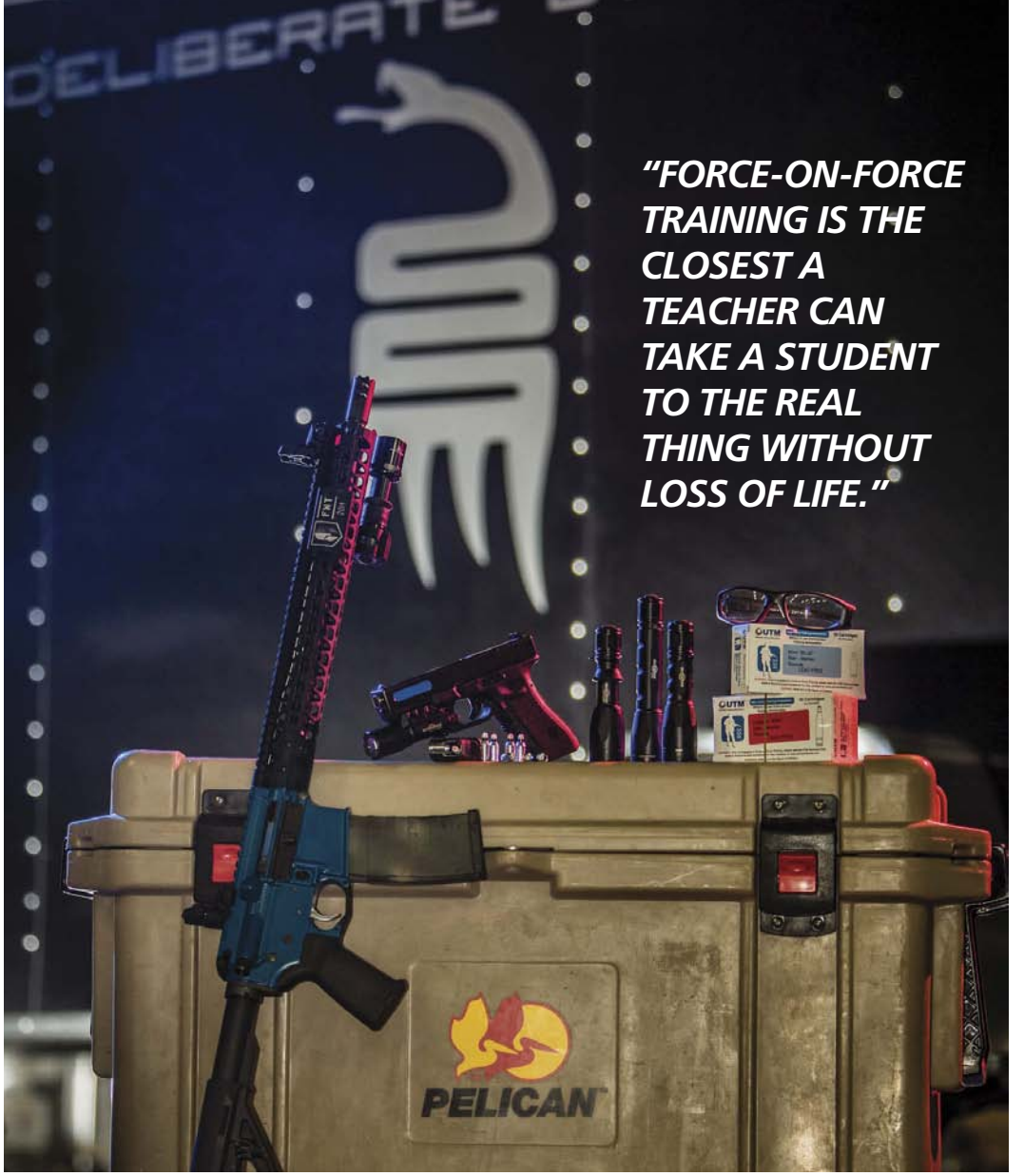
Force-on-force integrates these four pillars, exposing any weaknesses the student has. Common deficiencies are a lack of adequate physical fitness and breath control, which commonly leads to panic and bad decisions. The goal is to identify where your deficiencies are and focus on improvement.

WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

We all have teachers and mentors who have helped us on our path. Much of what we know today about individual and team-based force-on-force training at this level is due to pioneers like Ken Good, who co-founded Combative Concepts and later was the director of the Surefire Institute.

The knowledge he passed has down carried over through most of my career, and the principles he taught still hold true. **FP**

Danny Pritbor runs the Firebase Combat Studies Group, which is based in Florida. Reach him at info@firebasecsg.com.



"FORCE-ON-FORCE TRAINING IS THE CLOSEST A TEACHER CAN TAKE A STUDENT TO THE REAL THING WITHOUT LOSS OF LIFE."

With any firearms training, safety is paramount. Students and instructors used appropriate face protection and safety equipment during all training exercises.

3 KEYS TO SUCCESS

Breathing Under Stress

1

Remembering to breathe under stress has to be trained. Inhaling deep and exhaling in a controlled manner is important to ensure maximum oxygen intake, as this prevents hyperventilating.

2

Controlling your breathing is not only important for any dynamic physical activity, but it is especially effective during a gunfight because it helps to calm the mind and lowers the heart rate so you can maintain function of fine motor skills while providing a steady flow of oxygen to the brain.

3

We communicate more effectively when we are calm. Yelling and screaming are fear-based responses and speed up the heart rate.

TRAVEL TO WITNESS ELITE

Witness Elite Gold Team
Bbl-5.25"; Width-1.4"
OAL-10.5"; Weight-41 oz.
$2,336 MSRP
9mm, .38 Sup., .40 S&W, .45 ACP

Witness Elite Limited
Bbl-4.75"; Width-1.4"
OAL-9"; Weight-45 oz.
$1,462 MSRP
9mm, .40 S&W, .38 Sup.,.45 ACP, 10mm

Witness Elite Stock
Bbl-4.5"; Width-1.4"
OAL-8"; Weight-39 oz.
$1,102 MSRP
9mm, .40 S&W, .38 Sup., .45 ACP, 10mm

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AMERICAN ARMORY CORPORATION
www.eaacorp.com

If your dealer cannot get you a Witness Elite, ask them to email us for more information at eaacorp@eaacorp.com or write to us at: European American Armory, P.O. Box 560746, Rockledge, FL 32956.

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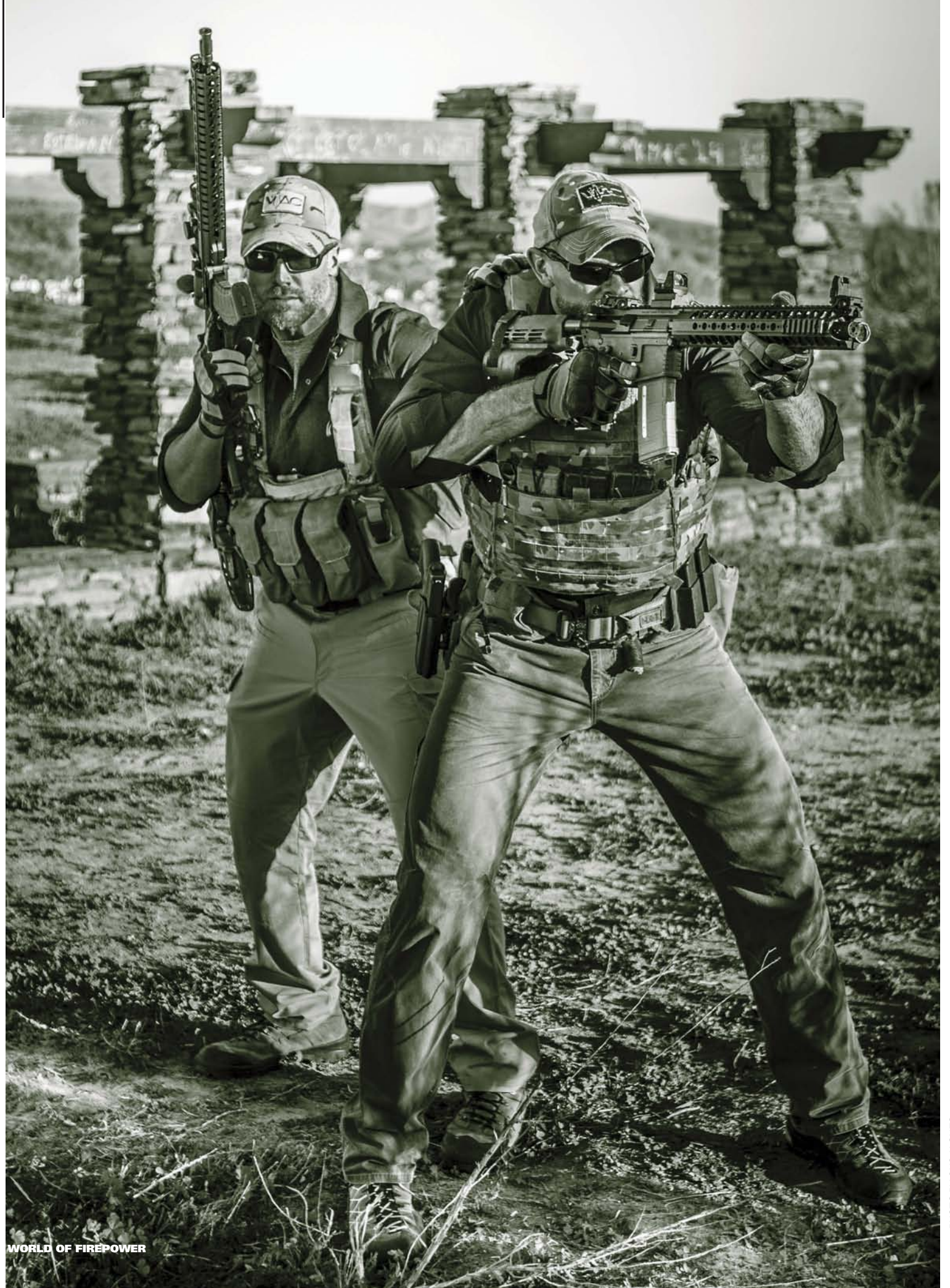


PHOTO BY GUS ALONZO

ON THE COVER

HOW THE PROS GEAR UP

THE MODELS

NAME: Geoff Reeves
OCCUPATION: Racecar driver, former Navy SEAL

NAME: Dave Rhoden
OCCUPATION: Entrepreneur, law enforcement

GEOFF'S GUN

COMPANY: CMGG
MODEL: Mk47
CALIBER: 7.62x39
PRICE: $1,649.95
WEB: CMMGInc.com

DAVE'S GUN

COMPANY: Salient Arms International
MODEL: AR Pistol
CALIBER:
PRICE: $2,995
WEB: SalientArms International.com

THE KNIFE

COMPANY: 5.11 Tactical
MODEL: LMC Recurve
PRICE: $47.99
WEB: 511Tactical.com

THE HATS

COMPANY: Viking Tactics
MODEL: Velcro Hat
PRICE: $25
WEB: VikingTactics.com

THE PANTS

COMPANY: Kuhl Clothing
MODEL: Revolver Pant
PRICE: $75
WEB: Kuhl.com

THE BOOTS

COMPANY: Salewa
MODEL: Hike Approach
PRICE: PRICES VARY
WEB: Salewa.com

MISCELLANEOUS GEAR

COMPANY: SureFire
MODEL: M300 Mini-Scout
PRICE: $299-$369
WEB: SureFire.com

COMPANY: SureFire
MODEL: X300 Ultra LED
PRICE: $299
WEB: SureFire.com

COMPANY: LBT
MODEL: Modular Plate Carrier
PRICE: $387.02
WEB: LBTInc.com

COMPANY: LBT
MODEL: LBT-2645C Magazine Pouch
PRICE: $37.18
WEB: LBTInc.com

COMPANY: 5.11 Tactical
MODEL: HardTime Gloves
PRICE: $79.99
WEB: 511Tactical.com

COMPANY: 5.11 Tactical
MODEL: Burner HF Half Sunglasses
PRICE: $109.99
WEB: 511Tactical.com

COMPANY: 5.11 Tactical
MODEL: ThumbDrive Holsters
PRICE: $84.99
WEB: 511Tactical.com

COMPANY: 5.11 Tactical
MODEL: 53031 Tactical Torch
PRICE: $74.99
WEB: 511Tactical.com

IT'S REALLY ALIVE

CMMG ENGINEERS THE MK47 MUTANT, A RELIABLE AND HIGHLY CUSTOMIZABLE RIFLE

▶ WORDS AND PHOTOS BY TERRILL HOFFMAN

LOOK AT THE MASS MEDIA AND YOU HAVE TO WONDER ABOUT SOCIETY. THE WALKING DEAD, ZOMBIES AND VAMPIRES HAVE ALL BEEN THE RAGE. WHAT COMES NEXT?

■ Even with the unusual look created by the AK magazine, the Mk47 is a clean looking rifle. Changes have been made, but the CMMG quality is still there along with the CMMG lifetime quality guarantee.

Rumors in the firearm industry are nothing new, and writers will try to track down every one of them in hopes of breaking a new story. However, some rumors just seem a little too unbelievable to take seriously. The latest was a report made by a "reliable source," and it all happened in early December 2014.

A series of late night thunderstorms were passing through Fayette, Missouri. As fate would have it, a massive bolt of lightning struck the CMMG manufacturing plant. Normally I would have taken this news as a minor occurrence if it weren't for the obviously shaken and horrified condition of my informant.

He swears that shortly after the lightning strike he heard the cry, "It's alive!" being emitted from the darkened bowels of CMMG's engineering department. At that point, in an effort to calm my friend, I assured him I would follow up on his report.

To my surprise, the following day the Internet was buzzing with news that CMMG was, in fact, involved with genetic engineering and that mutants were emerging from the factory. In an effort to separate fact from fiction, I made contact with CMMG. The company personnel could not confirm the thunderstorm or the lightning strike, but they did acknowledge that strange sounds coming from their engineers were nothing new.

When I asked about mutants, the company representative began to tell me about their new rifle the Mk47 "Mutant." They claim this weapon is a perfect blend between the AR-15 and AK-47. I believe in Big Foot, I have a soft spot in my heart for unicorns and I will readily acknowledge the possibilities of zombies, but mixing an AK and an AR has to be pure fiction. It has been tried before and the outcome is often an abomination.

Fortunately, CMMG was willing to prove to me that Mutants do exist, and a few days later a new rifle showed up at my local gun shop.

AK VS. AR

Before you can fully evaluate the Mutant, you need to study its gene pool. For 50 years the AR and AK have been the most produced military weapons and have faced off many times in conflicts around the globe.

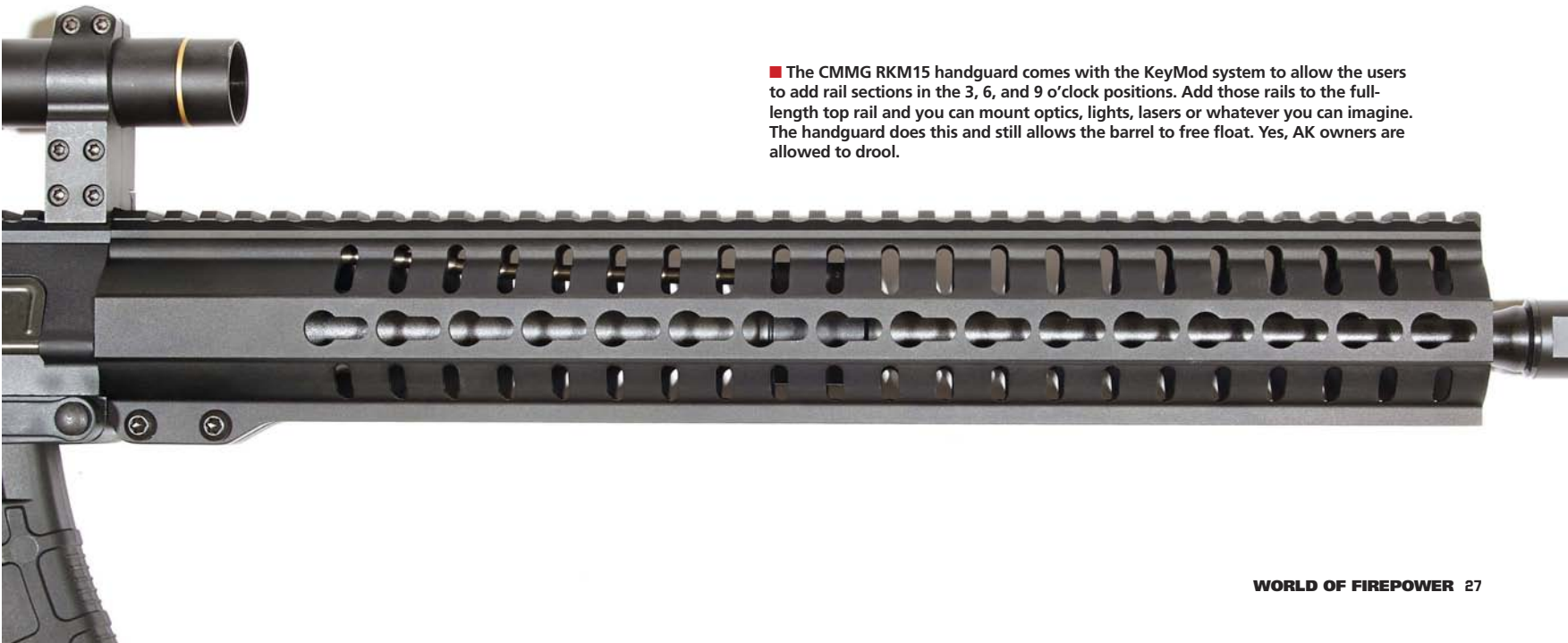
The AK-47 and its intermediate .30-caliber cartridge have been the poster child for the Communist Bloc nations and third world revolutions for half a century. Meanwhile, the AR-15 (M-16 in military nomenclature) has been the weapon of choice for the U.S. military and its allies.

Almost as bloody as the actual battles around the globe, the dis-

■ Whenever you take a step above the standard rifle, you will see the padding of Magpul butt-stocks and pistol grips. Both units are improvements over the basic designs and Magpul parts have earned their place on most top tier rifles.

"THEY CLAIM THIS WEAPON IS A PERFECT BLEND BETWEEN THE AR-15 AND AK-47. I BELIEVE IN BIG FOOT, I HAVE A SOFT SPOT IN MY HEART FOR UNICORNS AND I WILL READILY ACKNOWLEDGE THE POSSIBILITIES OF ZOMBIES, BUT MIXING AN AK AND AN AR HAS TO BE PURE FICTION."

■ The CMMG RKM15 handguard comes with the KeyMod system to allow the users to add rail sections in the 3, 6, and 9 o'clock positions. Add those rails to the full-length top rail and you can mount optics, lights, lasers or whatever you can imagine. The handguard does this and still allows the barrel to free float. Yes, AK owners are allowed to drool.



agreement between owners of each weapon has been just as fierce. Both sides want to claim their weapon is the better battle rifle.

AK owners will sing the praises of the more powerful 7.62x39 cartridge and the reliability of the AK design. AR owners return fire with the increased precision and accuracy of the AR-15 and the 5.56x45 NATO cartridge.

Similar to most wars there is no true winner in this conflict. Both sides are fanatical in their beliefs and even CMMG can't bring the two sides together. However, what CMMG did do was to create a third alternative that both sides may be able to accept.

MK47 MUTANT

The Mutant chambers the 7.62x39 mm cartridge, which has a .30-caliber projectile normally found with a weight of 123 grains. It is also supplied with a Magpul AK magazine and will accept quality AK magazines from any other vendor.

The overall operating system of the Mutant is derived from the design of the AR-15. Using a DGI (direct gas impingement) system may cause many to believe the Mutant is just another attempt of fitting the AK cartridge to the AR rifle, but they would be mistaken.

The upper and lower 7075-T6 receivers have been totally designed around the 7.62x39 and will not interchange with standard AR units. The upper receiver is enlarged to accept the equally enlarged bolt and bolt carrier group. One of the main problems in trying to adapt an AR bolt to fit the larger cartridge is that by the time you enlarge the bolt face there is little material remaining around the head of the cartridge. CMMG solved this by enlarging the bolt and carrier group to where it resembles a shortened .308 bolt carrier group. Of course, to hold this unit the entire upper receiver has been enlarged accordingly. The upper receiver attaches to the lower in typical AR fashion and has a dust cover and shell deflector, but it does not have a forward assist assembly. It should also be noted that because the bolt carrier is longer the charging handle is not interchangeable with an AR-15.

One advantage that even a diehard AK fan will have to admit is that the top rail on this AR style receiver offers a better platform for the mounting of sights and optics. Additional changes have been made to the lower receiver. The typical magazine rail has been replaced and the fitting of AK magazines are no longer a problem. The magazine release has been converted to a system similar to the AK and is a paddle mounted in front of the trigger guard. In this location the release is truly ambidextrous.

The trigger, safety, and Magpul MOE pistol grip are all fashioned after the AR-15. One feature that is not found is the bolt release because the magazines will not allow for the bolt to lock open after the last shot.

■ Once you put the Mutant lower next to a standard AR lower, the differences are apparent. Because the AK magazine locks in place forward and aft, the magazine well is no longer needed. A typical AR magazine locks in one position on the side of the magazine. The lack of the magazine well made room for the paddle release lever.

"UNLIKE THE MUTATION CREATED BY DR. FRANKENSTEIN, CMMG HAS AVOIDED SCARS, STICHES AND MIS-MATCHED PARTS."

Forward of the receivers the Mutant is all AR with the exception of the chambering. The 16.1-inch barrel has a medium taper profile and is fitted with a low profile gas block and CMMG SV muzzle brake. The barrel is surrounded by a CMMG RKM KeyMod free floated handguard. The ability to free-float the barrel by using the DGI system has long been considered as an accuracy advantage over the piston operated AK.

Most will agree that the piston system of the AK is cleaner because it prevents the gases created when a round is fired from entering the action, but it does affect the harmonics of the barrel. On a DGI operating system the barrel can be completely floated because even the rear section of the gas tube is not locked in place.

Many might mistake the cleaner system of the piston driven rifle as the reason for the noted reliability of the AK-47. In truth, the reliability is due to the looser fitting tolerances between parts and

■ The barrel of the Mutant is capped with the CMMG SV brake/compensator. The 7.62x39 has never been considered a hard kicking round, but the brake even made one-handed shooting possible.

the taper of the 7.62x39 cartridge. The problems noted with the reliability of the AR-15 when it was first introduced were mainly the result of the powder used in the 5.56x45, and the fact that soldiers were told that the rifles did not require cleaning. Both of those problems were corrected early on and the AR-15 has proven to be a very reliable platform. Basically, what it comes down to is that both operating systems work. I would expect both systems to fire a thousand rounds without problem or cleaning, but any shooter should give his rifle proper care no matter what system is used.

The back end of the Mutant has the typical receiver extension holding the buffer and spring of the AR system. On the sample received the buttstock was a Magpul CTR. The Mutant does come in three varieties and with three different prices. The main differences between the three are found in the buttstock, pistol grip, muzzle treatment and trigger. The Mutant knocking at my door was the Mk47 AKM, which is in the middle of the three for features. It has the Magpul furniture and the CMMG SV Brake but lacks the Geissele SSA trigger found on the AKM2.

RANGE TIME

Unlike the mutation created by Dr. Frankenstein, CMMG has avoided scars, stiches and mismatched parts. The rifle is cleanly done with all parts matching in both fit and finish. The Mk47 Mutant looked good, but only a range test would prove whether the two parent rifles could produce a satisfactory offspring. If nothing else, the AK-47's 7.62x39 cartridges have to be the cheapest available military round and surplus ammunition and magazines abound.

I gathered up several samples of both prior to testing and in doing so I faced an epiphany. My testing of this rifle was not to give the Mk47 the best chance of success but to give it the greatest opportunity to fail. The magazines were surplus military, and I couldn't even tell you from what military since they had no markings. The same could be said about some of the ammunition. There was even a box or two that did not have the manufacturer named. Because all of the boxes were at least printed in English I thought, Why not? The head stamp did have "08," which I took for a manufactured date of 2008, but if you rotated the case it read "80" which would put it at least 34 years old. Fortunately, I had several boxes of recently produced Winchester 123 grain full metal jacket to try out.

Mounting a Leupold 1.25-4x scope was rather easy because the Mutant has the rail system of the AR. Prior to the accuracy test I decided to test the reliability of the ammunition and magazines. All but one of the magazines functioned without a problem. The one bad magazine was a military surplus unit that I quickly discarded and that ended all of the problems for the day. To my surprise, all of the ammunition feed, fired and functioned without a single failure.

You cannot have a rifle named the Mutant come into your local gun shop without a few local shooters wanting to give it a try. Three of us ran it rather hard, and the only thing to slow us down was adjusting to the AK-style magazine system. The location of the release and remembering to "rock" the magazines in place took some adjustment. One of my volunteer shooters practices with a Sig 556R chambered in 7.62x39. He had no trouble quickly adjusting

The AK design requires that the magazine be "rocked" in during reloading. You insert the front of the magazine and allow it to catch before pulling (or rocking) the magazine to the rear until it snaps in place. It may sound a bit more complex than the AR design, but in truth it is just different. The more you use these magazines the more muscle memory will start to take over.

The trigger and safety are pure AR, but the magazine release has been relocated to the front of the trigger guard. You might also note the absence of a bolt release. To have the bolt lock back on the last round has been rated as a desirable feature to most, but trying to do it and still use standard AK magazines is probably what got the engineers grumbling.

■ The takedown operation of the AR rifle has been carried over with the Mk47. When a procedure is that easy there isn't a good reason to change it. While some of the parts are interchangeable, the receivers, bolt carrier group and charging handle are all mutations.

How To Reach CMMG

ADDRESS
P.O. Box 369
Fayette, MO 65248

PHONE
(660) 248-2293

WEB
www.CMMGInc.com

to the Mutant with its AK magazines. We didn't even try to keep count on the number of rounds fired, but it was well more than 300, and I would have total faith in the function of this rifle.

The Mutant has an outstanding balance and the standard CMMG trigger was acceptable. If I were going to keep this rifle, I would have ordered the model with the Geissele trigger or replaced the supplied trigger with a Wilson drop-in unit. I would have also gone through a better break-in procedure for the barrel.

When we slowed down a bit, it was time to pull out the chronograph and shoot for accuracy. For this procedure I chose three samplings of ammunition that I could identify by manufacturer. They consisted of the Winchester load with brass cases and steel-cased ammunition made by Norinco and Wolf.

Each brand was fired for four five-shot groups at 100 yards. The Winchester load gave the best accuracy with three of the five-shot groups running right at 1.5 inches. The forth group measured 1 3/8 inches. All groups from other two suppliers ran from 1 ¾ to 2¼ inches. It would have been nice to be able to try to work up a hand load for this rifle or to try a few "select" loadings, but time and availability did not permit either option.

The Winchester did run a velocity average of 2,370 feet per second, which only varied 5 fps from the factory advertised rating. The standard deviation of this load was a very low 12 fps and gave an energy level of about 1,575 foot pounds.

When you evaluate the performance of the 7.62x39, it is easy to see that this round would be suitable for medium-size game, which is something the 5.56 NATO cannot claim.

FINAL THOUGHTS

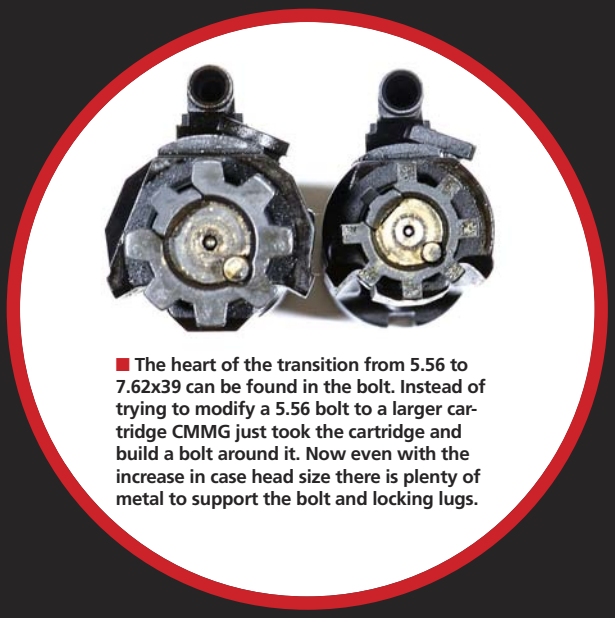
After a full day at the range and taking the time to sit back and evaluate the Mutant, I came to several conclusions.

First, I'm an avid fan of the AR platform. I will admit that the DGI operating system does require cleaning, but as once again proven by the Mutant, it is very reliable. I personally think that putting a piston system on an AR is a solution to a non-existent problem. Several companies produce some outstanding ARs with piston systems, and I do not want to take away from their achievements, but I have never felt hindered by the direct gas system.

I also consider the 5.56 NATO as an accurate cartridge very suitable for target matches or taking varmints.

For my defensive and hunting needs, I rely on my ARs chambered in the 7.62x40WT or the 25/223 wildcat cartridge. I also consider the AK-47 as an outstanding close-range battle rifle. It will never be a

■ The bolt is not the only part increased in size. The Mutant's bolt carrier group is in the middle surrounded by a .308 group on top and 5.56 group below. When they enlarged the bolt carrier, they built the upper receiver to match.



■ The heart of the transition from 5.56 to 7.62x39 can be found in the bolt. Instead of trying to modify a 5.56 bolt to a larger cartridge CMMG just took the cartridge and build a bolt around it. Now even with the increase in case head size there is plenty of metal to support the bolt and locking lugs.

tack-driver, but it wasn't designed to be.

The 7.62x39 is the better choice for the battlefield and the hunting woods when compared to the 5.56.

Mounting optics (which I require at my age) on an AK-47 is a nightmare. CMMG has indeed been playing with genetic engineering but their "Mutant" should become a notable addition to the family trees of both the AR and AK. They have taken the best of both systems and produced a rifle that will please anyone trying to decide between the AR and AK.

An added bonus is that due to its AR heritage it is also highly customizable. Now I just need to learn more about those noises coming from the engineering department. **FP**

Terrill Hoffman, a prolific and long-time firearms writer and photographer, lives with his wife in North Carolina. He also writes for Knives Illustrated.

SPECS

CMMG Inc.

MODEL: Mk47 Mutant AKM
CALIBER: 7.62x39
LENGTH: 33.5 inches (stock collapsed)
WEIGHT: 7.2 lbs. (unloaded)
BARREL: 16.1-inch medium taper profile 4140 SBN
RECEIVERS: 7075-T6 aluminum
STOCK: Magpul CTR buttstock
PISTOL GRIP: Magpul MOE
SIGHTS: None
MUZZLE TREATMENT: CMMG SV brake threaded 5/8-24
HANDGUARD: CMMG RKM15 KeyMod
MAGAZINE: Magpul PMAG 30 AK/AKM MOE
MSRP: $1,649.95 (AKM MODEL)

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Winchester 123 grain FMJ	2,370	1.37 inches
Wolf 123 grain FMJ	2,445	1.75 inches
Norinco 124 grain soft tip	2,410	1.87 inches

Note: Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity is average of 10 shots in fps measured 10 feet from muzzle, and accuracy in inches for the best five-shot group at 100 yards.

■ As long as you don't look too close, the Mutant might make you think it is an AR. But even at a distance the curved magazine will give you reason to pause. That profile is pure AK-47.

THE SPY WHO LOVED GEAR

FORMER CIA OPERATIVE'S TOP 10 TECH GADGETS AT SHOTSHOW

BY LINDSAY MORAN
PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURERS

FRANKLY, ONE OF THE DISAPPOINTING ASPECTS OF BEING AN UNDERCOVER OPERATIVE FOR THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, AS I WAS FROM 1998-2003, IS THE VERY ABSENCE OF COOL GADGETS.

As an idealistic and eager young recruit in my 20s, I fully expected to meet a real-life incarnation of Q when I walked through the door—someone who would equip me with self-destructor bags, dagger shoes, garroting watches and, of course, my own Walther PPK. No such luck.

In fact, the tools of the trade for a typical ops officer are surprisingly rudimentary and none too high-tech; street smarts and social skills serve you best of all. Still, that doesn't negate the love of gadgetry and the healthy respect for firearm technology that most of us shared in the Directorate of Operations. I went to SHOT Show 2015 with eye toward things I would've loved to have in the field or even in my post-spy life.

WOMAN - THINKSTOCK

1 TXFIRE SURVIVOR FIRESTARTER

The 20,000-strike flint and magnesium bar comes equipped with a glow-in-the-dark compass, thermometer and signal mirror embedded in the handle. Powered by the sun, it may seem low-tech, but I would've loved to have one of these handy all-in-one compass/fire sources for those cold winter operations in unfamiliar territory overseas. This gadget can provide peace of mind, no matter what your mission.

QUICK FACTS
Price: $25
Web: www.SurvivorFireStarters.com

2 SCOUT II

This high-tech camera provides thermal night vision capability even in near total darkness. Notwithstanding its sturdy exterior, it's incredibly lightweight. It also has a high-resolution LCD display and, for the 320 model, video-out capabilities. It's perfect for finding an adversary who might be hiding under the cover of darkness.

QUICK FACTS
Price: $2,999
Web: www.Flir.com

3 SNAKE EYES

I had a chance to try out this simple point-and-shoot technology—built-in front and rear sights—and was mightily impressed. The sights glow in dimly lit environments, allowing for almost instantaneous target recognition in even the most challenging of situations. Plain and simple, Snake Eyes makes it easy to shoot, even if you don't have the best aim. It's ideal for self-defense, and I would've considered this must-have weapon functionality back in the day.

QUICK FACTS
Price: $119.99
Web: www.DeadRingerHunting.com

" … ONE OF THE DISAPPOINTING ASPECTS OF BEING AN UNDERCOVER OPERATIVE FOR THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY … IS THE VERY ABSENCE OF COOL GADGETS."

4 PORTABLE LIGHT POD SYSTEM

This temporary lighting system offers the nighttime operative a way to illuminate interior and exterior areas of operation on command. Each set comes with three LED-equipped light pods that can be operated by remote control or switched to timer mode or sensor mode, in which the pods light up as you approach. This piece of tech could ensure the safety and survival of everyone, from the average camper to the covert operative.

QUICK FACTS
Price: $54.99
Web: www.SwissTechTools.com

5 FULL METAL JACKET FOR WOMEN

Someone finally got it right—stylish and flattering outerwear for the female permit holder. What's better is it can accommodate cross-draw or strongside draw for southpaw shooters, like me. I tried one on, and it was lightweight and comfy and would enable me to grip a firearm discretely. In dire situations, moreover, the FMJ allows you to shoot right through the jacket—without ever needing to draw. Perfect for the clandestine operative or undercover officer.

(Note: The company has similar FMJ for men.)

QUICK FACTS
Price: **$65**
Web: www.RiversWest.com

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6 MINI-LIVE 4G AND 4GV CELLULAR TRAIL CAMERA

While these rugged cameras are billed as the ultimate hunting tools, I would have liked to have one as a spy, or even as mom who takes her kids on all her sundry backwoods adventures! The rechargeable lithium battery pack can maintain its charge via solar panel. Also, the Live Series enables you to access your photos anywhere, anytime, making this camera ideal not just for hunters but for security personnel as well. They also have GPS tracking (good for kids or game) and a built-in theft alert notification. Plus the camo exterior is just plain cool.

QUICK FACTS
Price: **$440 - $480**
Web: www.SpyPoint.com

7 "LA FLASH" AIRSOFT RIFLE ADAPTER AND RECOIL ENABLED AIRSOFT LASER (R.E.A.L) CONVERSION KIT

Okay, I'll admit this family of Airsoft laser training gadgets appealed to me as much as a mom of two young boys as they did as a former shooting enthusiast. The technology converts Airsoft rifles (and the KWA ATP pistol) into laser-emitting training firearms—what could be cooler than that?—and provides a truly realistic training tool for the professional and the Airsoft hobbyist alike.

QUICK FACTS

Price: **$170**

Web: www.Laser-Ammo.com

8 PROTECTOR XT

This is another piece of equipment that appealed to the mom in me as much as the former operative; it's a quick-access biometrically secured gun rack that can accommodate a rifle or shotgun as well as a handgun (with a pistol-grip shotgun), and prevent either bad guys or kids from getting access to the weaponry in your home. The advanced biometric fingerprint technology, which can store up to 32 prints at a time, means that my husband or I could access a firearm in a matter of two seconds and need not worry about keys, access codes or—most importantly—the kids.

QUICK FACTS

Price: **$399**

Web: www.ProtectorXT.com

The SHOT Show
www.ShotShow.org

9 STEALTH COVERT OPERATIONS BACKPACK

One of my pet peeves about both military and intelligence operators is that their gear is typically a dead giveaway. No faster way to blow your cover than cargo pants or a tricked-out backpack! To avoid this obvious tell, I found a truly discreet backpack designed to carry a broken-down or short-barreled rifle that looks just like your typical sports or hiking pack. There's also an easily accessible handgun compartment. Though you can fit all of your secret gear and weapons inside this pack, the S-shaped carry straps mean it's not cumbersome—even for a small-framed spy like me!

QUICK FACTS
Price: **$224.95**
Web: www.EliteSurvival.com

10 TARBOT LIVE FIRE PAPER TARGET SYSTEM

One thing I learned in the CIA is that with everything, practice makes perfect. The typical agency operative doesn't actually get a lot of time to shoot, and the nature of our work means that packing heat is more a precautionary practice than anything else. Hence, you have a lot of rusty shooters.

This handy device allows you to change targets from your shooting position with the push of a button. Using a wireless key fob, you can advance the target roll on command. It's not only convenient, but it's also one added layer of security on the range, which in my mind is always a good thing.

Perhaps most appealing to me is that you can create your own custom images for an additional cost because as every seasoned operative knows, once you take out one high-value target, another one will show up to take his place.

QUICK FACTS
Price: **$199.99**
Web: www.TechValleyTech.com

Lindsay Moran is a former undercover operative for the Central Intelligence Agency. **FP**

ROCK 'N ROLL

THE GREATEST PRODUCTS FROM THE 2015 SHOTSHOW

▶ BY JOSHUA SWANAGON, ABE ELIAS, BREANNA ARMSTRONG AND DOUG JEFFREY / PHOTO BY GUS ALONZO, COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURERS

OUR ASSIGNMENT, WHICH WE GLADLY ACCEPTED, WAS TO ATTEND THE SHOT SHOW AND PROVIDE YOU WITH SOME OF THE HOTTEST NEW PRODUCTS THAT ARE ON TARGET TO ROCK THE INDUSTRY. WE HAD FOUR DAYS TO DO IT – SO WE GOT BUSY.

We worked our way through a maze of booths on various floors and battled about 62,000 industry professionals in the aisles. We talked to 1,600 exhibitors that were showcasing the latest and greatest firearms, ammunition, and shooting and hunting accessories, as well as makers of products specifically designed for the armed forces and law enforcement world.

The result?

We rocked, and now you can roll.

— Editor

1 BARSKA

SWAT-AR 6-36X52 RIFLE SCOPE

The new SWAT-AR 6-36x52 IR has been specifically designed for tactical rifles. Its compact size and low profile make the scope a

great addition to any flattop AR-15 rifle. Included is a 35mm cantilever scope mount, which places the SWAT-AR just forward of the rifle's charging handle. The SWAT-AR's 6-36x zoom makes it ideal for mid- to long-range targeting, and the illuminated mil-dot reticle – which switches between red and green – gives you an advantage in low-light situations. The fully multi-coated optics of this scope series aim to provide you with a sharp, clear image with great contrast. The SWAT-AR 6-36x52 IR also comes nitrogen-purged and O-ring-sealed for complete waterproof and fog-proof protection.

FEATURES
- Red/green illuminated reticle with adjustable brightness
- Side parallax adjustment knob
- Quick on/off push button design
- 35mm tube design
- Angled sniper edge sunshade
- 6-36x zoom
- Lockable windage/elevation turrets
- 35mm cantilever scope mount
- Flip-up scope caps and lithium battery

QUICK FACTS
Price: $449.99
Web: www.Barska.com

LEVEL 16X50 BINOCULAR

The Barska 16x50 Level Binocular is an all-purpose binocular that's well suited for a number of activities, including hunting, sporting events and concerts. Shock-absorbing rubber armor protects the optics and creates a non-slip ergonomic design.

FEATURES
- Fully multi-coated optics
- 16x magnification
- 50mm objective lenses
- BK-7 prism
- Fold-down eyecups
- Large center focus knob
- Shock-absorbing rubber armor
- Attachment point for tripod adapter

QUICK FACTS
Price: $89.99
Web: Barska.com

20-60X65 LEVEL SPOTTING SCOPE SERIES

The Level Spotting Scope Series is at home on the trail or at the target range. All spotting scopes in the Level Series feature fully multi-coated optics for a bright, sharp view. Variable zoom magnification allows you to lock onto your subject and then zoom in for greater detail.

All Level Spotting Scopes are 100 percent waterproof and fog proof and feature a tough rubber body for added protection. The sunshade on the Level Series can be extended to help reduce glare. Each spotting scope comes with a soft carrying case and tripod.

FEATURES
- Multi-coated optics
- Variable zoom magnification
- Waterproof and fog proof
- Soft carrying case and tripod included

QUICK FACTS
Price: $199.99
Web: Barska.com

2 PROTAG

THE DUET

International Supplies introduces a smart Bluetooth tag that allows you to keep track of your smart phone and other belongings so you never misplace or accidentally leave these items behind.

This state-of-the art, loss-prevention system is called the Duet, and PROTAG makes it.

Attach the Duet to just about anything – a bag, keys, wallet, hunting gear, camera equipment, firearms – and keep track of it. At 2.8 cm x 2.8 cm, the tag is extremely small, so you can easily carry it or attach it to one of your belongings.

Download the App from Google Play Store or an Apple App store onto your mobile phone, create an online account and pair the Duet with your phone. Anytime the Duet is separated from its paired phone by more than 33 feet, you are immediately notified via Duet and phone. The PROTAG App can keep track of up to 10 Duet-tagged items.

FEATURES
Uses Bluetooth 4.0 low-energy connectivity
Compatible with iOS and V4.3 Android devices
Number of pairings per phone: Up to 10
Battery: 3V Lithium coin battery CR2016
(Duet ships with 2 replaceable batteries)
Warranty: 1 year

QUICK FACTS
Price: $29.90
Web: InternationalSupplies.com

3 DANIEL DEFENSE

PRO SERIES COMPETITION RIFLE

The V11 Pro Series Rifle is designed to encompass the core attributes athletes search for in a competition rifle.

"As more and more consumers begin to utilize the AR platform for competition, we felt it was the right time to release this version of our popular V11," explained Jordan Hunter, director of marketing for Daniel Defense.

Built around an 18-inch barrel and rifle length gas system, the V11's competitive edge also stems from the lightweight SLiM Rail 15.0, GEN II Muzzle Climb Mitigator, Geissele SD-3G competition trigger and upgraded charging handle.

"The V11 Series rifles were released back in the summer," continues Hunter. "Not only were they an instant hit, leaving with consumers as fast as they could be placed on the racks, it left us brainstorming on ways we could expand this model."

The answer came in the form of a precision rifle with the desired components for the 3-gun stage or other recreational shooting.

FEATURES
18-inch barrel
Gas system
Geissele SD-3G competition trigger
Upgraded charging handle

QUICK FACTS
Price: Varies
Web: DanielDefense.com

4 BUCK KNIVES

245 MWG NAVY SEAL KNIFE

Special Warfare Operator First Class (SEAL) Matthew J. Leathers was a highly decorated combat veteran with numerous awards, including the Bronze Star, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal and Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal.

In 2013, Leathers was lost at sea during open ocean training exercises. During his nine years with the U.S. Navy SEALS, Leathers designed a knife that held up to his high standards and caught the eye of his fellow SEALS.

Buck Knives has entered into agreement with Tim Leathers, father of fallen Navy SEAL Matthew Leathers, to continue making a knife that was originally designed by Leathers himself. Designed by a SEAL for SEALS, the 245 Matt Would Go knife is a tool built for the roughest of circumstances.

FEATURES

Constructed of 5160 steel and custom multi-color Micarta handles
The 245 Matt Would Go comes with a textured Kydex sheath with TEK-LOK belt clip
Made in the USA

QUICK FACTS

Price: $245
Web: BuckKnives.com

Matthew J. Leathers

5 DESERT TECH

REMINGTON 700 SHOT ACTION RIFLE CHASSIS

The R7S stock chassis was designed for users looking to maximize the portability, comfort and accuracy of their Remington 700 short action rifle.

The R7S has an adjustable cheekpiece, adjustable length of pull, ambidextrous folding stock, a precision monopod option and poly¬mer insulation on all skin contact points. The R7S is a true drop-in chassis for all Remington 700 short action rifles, including oversized recoil lugs without modification. The R7S is also designed to accept both Accuracy International Ax magazines and Badger Ordnance magazines.

FEATURES
Unfolded Stock Length:
33.5 inches (85.1 cm)
Folded Stock Length:
.308 Win: 22.6 inches (57.4 cm)
.223 Rem: 16.6 inches (42.2 cm)
Weight: 3.26 pounds (1.47 kg)

QUICK FACTS
Price: $745 (fixed stock), $795 (folding stock)
Web: DesertTech.com

STEALTH RECON SCOUT A1

The Stealth Recon Scout A1 is nearly a foot shorter than conventional sniper rifles and maintains 1/2 MOA or better accuracy with match ammunition while maintaining the ability to change the rifle's caliber and length. All of the features of the standard SRS, including the caliber conversion kits, are now available to left-handed shooters.

QUICK FACTS
Price: $5,295 - $5,745 depending on caliber
Web: DesertTech.com

DESERT TECH

10-ROUND COMPETITION MAGAZINE

The 10-round magazine will increase the firepower of all SRS chassis outfitted with conversions chambered in .243 Win, .260 Rem, .308 Win, 6.5 Creedmoor and 6.5x47 Lap. The single-feed magazine will fit all existing SRS systems.

QUICK FACTS
Price: $155
Web: DesertTech.com

DTSS .375 CHEYTAC SUPPRESSOR BY ELITEIRON

Made exclusively for Desert Tech by EliteIron, the HTI suppressor is fabricated from non-magnetic, 304 stainless steel and trued for concentricity. The internal parts, made from 17-4 PH stainless steel, are CNC-machined from solid billets and 100 percent TIG (Tungsten Inert Gas) welded for added strength and toughness. The internal baffle design is a heavily modified K-type. Knurled bands at the attachment end of the sound suppressor aid in the installation and removal of the unit and serve as tactile locator bands in low light.

QUICK FACTS
Price: $1,895
Web: DesertTech.com

6 ERGO GRIP

DELTA GRIP FOR RUGER

Cool and functional. That's the Delta Grip for Ruger.

The ergonomic design allows better natural pointing and aiming. The textured rubber is overmolded, and it has a rigid polymer core for a comfortable, secure grip. It is a one-piece design for a clean look and feel.

QUICK FACTS
Price: $29.99
Web: ErgoGrips.net

ULTRA-LITE Z HANDGUARD

Ergo Grip's Ultra Lite Z KeyMod handguards are designed for a major upgrade in performance and versatility for any M4-style carbine with standard plastic handguards.

Based on Ergo Grip's Z Rail design, these new handguards are ultra slim and ultra light, making them easy to grip and carry. KeyMod slots on the sides and bottom and the integral Picatinny rail on top provide the maximum versatility and flexibility for mounting accessories as needed.

FEATURES
Weight: 5.6 ounces
2.325 inches high and 1.6 inches wide
Machined form 6061-T6 aluminum
KeyMod slots on both sides and bottom for mounting accessories

QUICK FACTS
Price: $205.88
Web: ErgoGrips.net

7 MALTERRA

REMOTE SITE BAGS

The Remote Site Bag System is designed to accommodate the trek no matter the mode of transportation while protecting your gear against the elements.

It features full MalWear waterproof construction, radio frequency welded seams and welded panels that essentially meld the advanced fabrics into one singular piece.

The RSB also sport splash-proof zippers to protect the most vulnerable part of the bag and Hypolon MOLLE panels to accommodate Malterra's PFCS (Pallet Friendly Clip System) that provides the ability to clip any of the bags to each other to facilitate building aircraft pallets.

FEATURES

Available in a variety of colors
Firm rubber handles
Large sleeve for ID

QUICK FACTS

Price: $299 (75L), $335 (95L), $375 (125L)
Web: MaddoxDefense.com

8 GT LINE

EXPLORER CASES

Developed by GT Line, Explorer Cases are made of a high-quality copolymer polypropylene compound so they are extremely durable. They are also water tight, dust-, chemical- and humidity-proof, and are built to withstand extreme temperatures from below 27.4°F to above 194°F. That's very cool.

Features include a jam-free manual pressure release valve and latches, an o-ring seal, large front handle and side handles for easy carry, wheels with bearings and an optional digital lock. The Explorer Firearm Cases are available in a variety of sizes to suit your needs, and can be purchased with or without internal customizable foam bedding. Shoulder straps are also available.

FEATURES

Heavy-duty padded synthetic fabric
Durable zippers with nylon pulls
Neoprene hook and loop side flaps
Adjustable straps to secure contents in position
Exterior padded zipped pouches

QUICK FACTS

Price: $240
Web: ExplorerCases.com

9 SIG SAUER

ELITE PERFORMANCE V-CROWN JHP AND FMJ

SIG SAUER continues to expand its Elite Performance Ammunition line by introducing two new 10mm options: a 180-grain 10mm Elite Performance V-Crown Jacketed Hollow Point (JHP) and a 180-grain Elite Performance Full Metal Jacket (FMJ) premium target load.

The 10mm Elite Performance V-Crown JHP is an extremely accurate load delivering consistent expansion. A distinct advantage of the SIG V-Crown is the toothed cannelure located halfway up the shank of the bullet. Its location more effectively locks the jacket and lead/alloy core, providing exceptional structural integrity in a jacketed bullet. This design ensures maximum weight retention and energy on impact.

QUICK FACTS

Price: Prices vary
Web: SIGSAUER.com

"We are pleased to add this accurate, powerful round to our Elite Performance Ammunition line. The 10mm caliber with our proprietary 180-grain SIG V-Crown bullet is a great load for hunting mid-sized game and an ideal round for self-defense. And for target shooters, we now offer a 180gr 10mm Elite Performance FMJ round." — Bud Fini, vice president of marketing for SIG SAUER

"If you are looking for top quality, indestructible, waterproof rifle cases at an affordable price, this is it. These cases are battle tested, completely Mil-Spec and built to last. They also fall within TSA guidelines for easy transport."
— Doug Pircher, general manager of International Supplies

10 UNDER ARMOUR

FAT TIRE GXT BOOT

New from Under Armour, the Fat Tire Boot takes boots to another level. Inspired by fat tire biking technology, UA created a Michelin tire-based rubber cushioning system that allows full-grip reliability in any terrain. Not only are you walking around with tires on your feet that provide excellent cushioning and comfort, but the design is also edgy with a tactical camo look.

QUICK FACTS
Price: $199.99
Web: UA.com

The Fat Tire GXT Boot will be available in July 2015.

PHOTO CREDIT: GUY SPANENBERG

11 TACTICAL NIGHT VISION COMPANY

IR PATROL M300W THERMAL WEAPON SCOPE WEAPON-MOUNTED THERMAL MONOCULAR

These thermal monoculars from IR Defense Corporation are designed for military applications and performance, so you know they are top of the line.

They are rugged, light and compact, so they are ready for any mission, especially with the BAE Systems MicroIR Thermal Core, which boasts 12 Micron performance. This means you can count on a 50 percent increase in magnification during digital zoom compared to most other cores.

FEATURES
Dimensions: 5.95 inches long, 2.2 inches wide and 2.95 inches high
Weight: 1 pound
Housing: Machined 6061 aircraft aluminum
Sensor: Vanadium oxide, uncooled microbolometer
FOV: 22 degrees optical, 3 degrees digital
Zoom: 1X optical, 8x digital

QUICK FACTS
Price: $6,495 - $6,842.34
Web: TNVC.com

12 MAGPUL

PMAG D-60

The new PMAG D-60 from Magpul is a sure-shot. It's a 60-round 5.56x45 NATO/.223 Remington polymer magazine for AR15/M4. It is sturdy, reliable and durable – and the best part about this affordable 60-round mag is that it works like a charm.

FEATURES
Paint pen dot matrix for easy marking
Rear window for instant capacity indication
Compatible with a wide range of NATO firearms

QUICK FACTS
Price: $129.95
Web: Magpul.com

13 BERETTA

PICO .380

Beretta's Pico double-action semi-auto is the thinnest .380 manufactured. It is a thin, sleek and extremely concealable micro compact carry pistol, designed to fit perfectly in your pocket.

The Pico weighs 11.5 ounces unloaded.

FEATURES
6+1 Rounds
Smallest .380 ACP made
Double/single action
Two stainless steel magazines, one flush and one with a grip extension
Smooth, snag-free design
3-dot sight system
LaserMax Light
5.1 inches in overall length
2.7-inch barrel
Polymer grips

QUICK FACTS
Price: $379.99
Web: BerettaUSA.com

14 OLYMPIC ARMS

MPR 308-15

The Olympic Arms MPR-308-15 multi-purpose lower receiver assembly is made to fit both standard AR-15 magazines and Olympic Arms 308 magazines. It's a universal multi-caliber lower that had our jaws drop to the floor at SHOT. It is easy to change from short 223/5.56 rounds to the longer .308-type calibers in seconds. It is truly the only product like it. By switching out the upper, the MPR-308-15 can shoot either 5.56/223 and .308 Win along with many other cartidges.

QUICK FACTS
Price: $1,268 (16-inch barrel), $1,689 (24-inch barrel)
Web: OlyArms.com

15 COLT

LE6920-OEM1 & 2

The OEM models from Colt are ideal for those who like to customize their ARs.

FEATURES
Caliber: 5.56x45mm NATO
Barrel length: 16 inches
Matte black finish

QUICK FACTS
Price: $793
Web: Colt.com

16 ARSENAL FIREARMS

AF2011-A1 DOUBLE BARREL PISTOL

This gem was quite the showstopper at SHOT. This is the first industrial double-barrel semi-automatic pistol on the market. At more than 4 pounds unloaded, it is heavy, and it has a large grip, so make sure you have large hands before even thinking about picking this pistol up.

FEATURES

Geometric lock
Semi-automatic double-barrel hammer pistol
Short recoil, 1911 system
Calibers: .45 ACP, .38 Super Auto
Double hammer trigger with single spur, double independent or single trigger
Two single magazines, paired with single floor plate, 8+8 rounds
Interchangeable back, fixed or adjustable sights
Total length: 8.5 inches
Total height: 5.7 inches
Total width: 2 inches

QUICK FACTS
Price: From **$4,400**
Web: ArsenalFirearms.com

17 VOODOO TACTICAL

VOODOO TACTICAL SHOOTING MAT AND RIFLE DRAG BAG

To produce this bag, Voodoo went to the top. Military and LE officers designed this, and a vet gave us the rundown on it.

The outside offers a carry handle and a full backpack-like shoulder harness so you can carry your mat and your rifle.

The bag also features a padded pouch for your spotting scope (fits up to an 80mm objective lens) and a large padded pouch for miscellaneous products, such as electronics, binoculars or rangefinders.

It has drag handles on the nose, but the handles store into convenient pouches when not in use.

This bag rocks.

FEATURES

Unfolds into three sections
Includes a fold-out leg panel at one end and a fold-out extension on the front to keep your muzzle blast from throwing up dust
Anti-skid pads offer a solid platform for your bipod
Constructed from rugged materials with heavy-duty zippers and reinforced stress points

QUICK FACTS
Price: **$191.95**
Web: www.VoodooTactical.net

18 MTM SPECIAL OPS

PREDATOR TACTICAL WATCH

MTM Special Ops' line of tactical watches is impressive, and that's probably why so many celebrities wear them. Take the Predator watch. It features quartz Swiss chronograph movement with a date window, it's equipped with glowing tritium gas-filled tubes, and it comes in three finishes (silver, titanium silver and camouflage).

FEATURES
Water resistant to 660 feet
Scratch resistant, anti-reflective, sapphire crystal glass
Stainless steel and camouflage weigh 8 ounces; titanium weighs 5.5 ounces

QUICK FACTS
Price: **$450** **(silver),**
$550 **(titanium silver),**
$750 **(camouflage)**
Web: SpecialOpsWatch.com

19 STEADIFY

STEADIFY MONOPOD

Every second counts. You don't need us to remind you of that.

Steadify is an extendable monopod that extends from the waist belt. It is attached to your body so you gain the utmost flexibility in situations in which you cannot waste time.

FEATURES
Quick and quiet set up
Attaches to the body for hands-free stalking
Absorbs the gun's weight
Fully adjustable length
Can extend up to 30 inches above the waist belt
Weighs approximately 0.84 pounds

QUICK FACTS
Price: **$99**
Web: InternationalSupplies.com

20 ETYMOTIC RESEARCH

GUNSPORT•PRO ELECTRONIC EARPLUGS

Silence is golden. Just ask Etymotic Research. Etymotic's GunSport•PRO electronic earplugs are for those who need protection from firearms as well as repeated gunfire from nearby shooters. The GunSport•PRO improves distance detection up to five times.

FEATURES
Designed for gun enthusiasts
Allows natural hearing when no background noise is present
Gradually protects from loud continuous noise
ACCU technology
High-definition, balanced armature drivers
High-sensitivity microphones
Wide dynamic-range compression
K•AMP® signal processing

QUICK FACTS
Price:
$399
Web:
Etymotic.com

21 YHM

9MM YHM-15 PISTOL

This one really turns some heads.

It features a light compact design and Picatinny and Keymod rail systems, which makes it ideal for LE, special ops, home and personal defense.

FEATURES
9mm
Metal form 32-round mag capacity
Blow-back operating system
Flat top A3 forged 7075-T6 aluminum upper
Forged 7075-T6 aluminum lower
Matte black finish
Weighs 5.04 pounds

QUICK FACTS
Price: $1,557
Web: YHM.net

.556 YHM-15 PISTOL

This 5.40-pound pistol is a real heavyweight.

The Keymod handguard weighs in at 11.8 ounces and is 9.3 inches long on the .556. As the 9mm, this one is the perfect candidate for LE, home and personal defense and the military.

FEATURES
5.56 caliber
Standard 30-round magazine
Direct impingement carbine length gas system
Flat top A3, forged 7075-T6 aluminum upper
Forged 7075-T6 aluminum lower
Matte black finish
Weighs 5.40 pounds

QUICK FACTS
Price: $1,205
Web: YHM.net

22 ASP USA

USB-RECHARGEABLE FLASHLIGHT

Like us, you may be a big fan of rechargeable flashlights; however, no one is a big fan of having a flashlight die in the field with no options to get it up and running again … other than buying extra proprietary rechargeable batteries at exorbitant prices.

Problem solved.

The ASP Triad USB rechargeable flashlight is impressive. Not only is the charging port a micro USB, allowing you to charge it from a computer, wall outlet, portable charger or car charger, but there is also the option of using two CR123 batteries if it loses its charge in the field. So you get the best of both worlds.

FEATURES
300 Lumens
(ANSI Standard)
Three-hour run time
Charge indicator
Type III hardcoat anodizing
6.25 inches long

QUICK FACTS
Price: $145
Web: ASP-USA.com

23 EMERSON

BALLISTIC GLASSES

As somebody who likes to shoot and ride a Harley, I wear sunglasses that look good and also double as effective protective eyewear. After two years of research and design and the enlistment of "one of the most respected optics companies in the world, located in Italy," Emerson Knives introduced their new ballistic line of sunglasses. And I am stoked. Not only are they comfortable, but they also "meet or exceed all government specifications for use under adverse or dangerous conditions." Let's ride.

FEATURES
Ballistic shatterproof lenses
Top ANSI rating (ANSI Z87.1-2010)
Polarized lenses
Anti-scratch hard coat
Distortion free visual field corrected lenses
TR-90 high-impact frames

QUICK FACTS
Price: $119 to $144.95
Web: EmersonKnives.com

QUICK FACTS
Price: $102.45 to $255.95
Web: BlackHawk.com

24 BLACKHAWK

DIVERSION WAX CANVAS BAGS

Do you like to blend in and move around unnoticed?

If you're like us, you favor the "gray man" gear over tactical. However, there are features that can be nice about tactical gear but hard to find in every-day bags and packs, such as easy access to your firearm or other immediately necessary gear.

This is why I was so quickly drawn to the BLACKHAWK Diversion Wax Canvas Bags. I really appreciated how nice they looked right off the bat, very inconspicuous and something that would even fit in an office environment without turning any heads.

But the real win was that they were also very well thought out with tactical features included, such as quick access to important gear/firearm/computer, waterproofing and quick release buckles with true one handed release and re-clasp capabilities.

FEATURES
Constructed of 10.10-ounce Army Duck Martexin original wax canvas
Quick-access pass-through waterproof zipper on lid
Padded back with 3D mesh and a removable back stiffener
Loop-lined handgun and accessory storage compartment with access through top or a hidden, zippered back panel
Additional loop panels for accessory attachment
20 inches high x 12.2 inches wide x 5.5 inches deep

QUICK FACTS
Price: $449
Web: Kitanica.net

25 KITANICA

MARK VI JACKET

If you prefer jackets that include useful features but are not overtly tactical, Mark IV may be your No. 1 choice. I was very impressed with the seven exterior and four internal pockets. It's almost like a wearable daypack.

With its inconspicuous design, it would fit well into any environment, but it also includes hook and loop panels to add nametape and patches for anybody operating in an official capacity.

Finally, with its weather/water resistant Cordura shell and stowable hood, the Mark VI makes for a well-rounded jacket, adding needed weather protection to its list of other great features. **FP**

FEATURES
Adjustable and stowable hood
Seven exterior pockets, including two zippered hidden upper pockets
Four interior pockets, two zippered pockets and two large hammock pockets
Articulated elbow
Water/weather resistant urethane coated 330 denier Cordura fabric shell
Nylon taslan liner

LONG DAY OFF

"I HAD SEEN .45 CALIBER BULLETS IN FLIGHT BEFORE, BUT THEY WERE ALWAYS MOVING IN THE OTHER DIRECTION …"

STRAIGHT 8 PHOTO

IN PART II OF THIS ADRENALINE-FILLED TRUE STORY, A SUSPECT AMBUSHES SWAT DURING A HOSTAGE RESCUE ATTEMPT

WORDS BY SCOTT SCHANAKER
PHOTOS BY STRAIGHT 8 PHOTO

TIME TO MOVE!

I LET OUT AN EXHALE AND STEPPED INTO THE DARKENED HALLWAY. THE GUNFIRE HAD QUIETED AND WITH IT HAD COME THE SENSATION AS IF A DENSE VEIL HAD BEEN LIFTED FROM THE ROOM'S DISORIENTING ATMOSPHERE; MOVEMENT FELT LESS RESTRICTED AND MY THINKING HAD BEGUN TO CLEAR.

I could sense Chris right behind me as I moved to the open door on the right. I did a quick Israeli-style peek then worked the opening from the hallway. Daylight was shining inside, and I cleared as much as I could from the hall. I was about to make entry when Chris called out, "In here!" as gunfire erupted with measured blasts.

I turned and saw Chris and Holmes working the closed door on the hallway's left side. The two pushed their bulk against the door, but it opened only inches as something was obstructing from behind. The two relentlessly worked the door wide enough to get inside. Gunshots echoed while bullets pierced the wall to our right as we entered a room of complete darkness.

I was third in and had to wedge myself sideways between the wall on the right and a heavy wooden dresser and upright mattress that had been barricading the door. The Cordura of my tac-vest scraped noisily against the wall as I struggled through the confining five-foot-long entryway.

Another shot rang out, and the muzzle flash ignited the room just as Chris had cleared the hall and hooked right, followed by Holmes who was a foot in front of me. As I squeezed past the last foot of barricade, I hit my weapon light and torched the room's deep left corner. In the white brightness, a king-size box spring squatted dead center in the small room, leaving only a foot and a half of walking space on a floor covered with clothing and garbage. I climbed on top of the box spring to get an angle on the corner. Clear!

I looked up and caught sight of a sheet of plywood nailed over the bedroom window. What the hell…?

Gunfire raged behind me, and I scanned right to look for work. Chris was silhouetted from the reflection of his weapon's light bouncing off the wall in front of him. He was deep in a gunfight with an invisible enemy.

"He's in here!" Chris yelled as I angled across the box spring to find a shot.

"Where's here?

It's just a wall with some clothes hanging on it, I thought as I scanned for the threat. In front of Chris' position were hanging a robe and what looked like towels and other clothing. The more I scanned the more the gunfire continued. I was getting irritated. Dammit! What's he shooting at? I don't have a shot.

"THE ENERGY IN THE LIVING ROOM WAS PENSIVE AND EDGY AS EIGHT SWAT COPS SQUATTED AT THE READY."

STRAIGHT 8 PHOTO

"He's in the bathroom. I saw him go in there. Don't shoot. He's got the hostage!"

Chris yelled as the hanging clothes in front of him fluttered and waved with the sound of each gun blast. Chris had not been firing like I had first thought. All the gunfire had been coming from the other side of the wall in front of us.

GUNFIRE AND CONFUSION

I stepped across the box spring and moved in next to Chris and Holmes. Amidst the gunfire and confusion my mind was slow to register that the clothes hanging 3 feet directly in front of me were in reality obscuring the bathroom door. My weapon light flooded a white robe, a jacket and towels as bullets passed through the clothing, zinging by me within inches. I had seen .45 caliber bullets in flight before, but they were always moving in the other direction—this was a different experience entirely.

Another torrent of bullets tore through the room's dense and smoky air as Holmes dropped low and began firing rounds from his AR. The gunfire sounded like muffled thuds despite the high-powered volley.

Auditory exclusion had filtered the blasts that were a few feet from my ears. Under normal circumstances my hearing would be damaged for days. The reprieve was appreciated, but served to only heighten the dream-like reality that was playing out inside the small bedroom.

The gunfire continued at a steady cadence as several more bullets flew in front of me. This vest is freakin' awesome, I thought for a nanosecond, certain that I had been taking hits and just could not feel them. The irrational idea quickly faded as I thought of my exposed legs. I shook off the distractions and tried to refocus as my mind cycled through my training and experience in attempt to find anything remotely similar to equate this event to. I came up short on options.

"Anyone hit?" I yelled over the gunfire.

All gave a "No" as more gunfire erupted. Just then my ear mic came to life.

"We have the hostage."

The team leader's message was an unexpected jolt.

"Confirming, you have the hostage?" I asked, immediately thinking the follow-up team must have located the hostage in a different part of the house. If that were the case, there was no need for us to be there taking rounds from someone we could not see.

"We have the hostage" came the team leader's reply as more shots rang out. From the corner of my eye I watched Chris disappear and the light from his weapon went dark. A moment later Chris said, "I think I'm hit."

Shit!! I thought as I stepped in front of Chris and lay down a barrage of gunfire center mass on the door.

"Get him out of here," I yelled to Holmes and Key as I continued to fire.

Instantly Holmes and Key's weapons' lights went dark, leaving mine as the lone light source in the room. There was a pause in the gunfire from the bathroom, and in the eerie silence I could almost feel the darkness closing from behind me. I heaved my bulk against the door in attempt to gain entry, but it moved only inches as it flexed inward with that familiar soft firmness of a human body bracing against it. My thought was to keep pressure on whoever was behind the door so Holmes and Key could get Chris out of the room. Once I got the door open wide enough, I would drop a flash-bang inside the bathroom then move in to the confined space and finish the job with my handgun.

I transitioned off my sub-gun, which threw the room into complete blackness. I drew the flash-bang from my thigh holster with my gloved right hand and was knocked from behind as Holmes and Chris pushed pass in the confined space. In the inky blackness the flash-bang fell to the floor. I had not yet pulled the pin from the spoon. Pissed at my mistake I attacked the door again with all my weight and drew my handgun while I struggled to open the door further but to no avail. My angle was wrong and in the confined space and stepping half on the box spring there was no footing for leverage. Whoever was on the other side of the door had the advantage, and I could barely move the door a few inches.

That was when a significant thought hit me.

MISCOMMUNICATION

This isn't an execution. We've got the hostage, and I don't need to be here. But my adrenaline was surging, and I was focused. I wanted this thing over with, but I turned and made my way out of the room as more gunfire erupted behind me.

Holmes was waiting for me in the living room and directed to cover behind the brick fireplace. He also reminded me to reload. I did both and grabbed another flash bang from the supply that had been brought in by the other team members who were hunkered behind the fireplace. Shots continued to ring out as bullets passed through the living room wall above us.

The team leader had made his way into the living room from the outside, and I asked, "Where's the hostage?"

He looked at me with ashen face and said, "We don't have the hostage. I was asking if you had the hostage."

In that fraction of the second I realized the genius hadn't keyed his microphone long enough before he transmitted his message and subsequently cut off the word "Do." He had been attempting to ask, "Do we have the hostage?" Twice!! Why in the hell would you radio me a question during the middle of a gunfight? I looked at the team leader in disbelief.

"We have to go back in there?"

I wanted to hit something, someone, but there was work to do.

BACK IN

As team members retrieved gear, I set up a long gun to over-watch the bedroom door in case the suspect attempted to come out. I could see that my sniper was not happy with his position, as he would have minimal cover. Sorry, buddy. Keep us safe.

Gunshots continued sporadically and appeared to coincide with any movement across the living room. We realized that the suspect was firing as shadows passed in front of the bullet holes in the living room wall. Once the ballistic panels were set against the walls, I had one of

COURTESY OF SCOTT SCHANAKER

■ Scott Schanaker (left) has worked in law enforcement for 24 years.

The Hostage and the Suspect

A few hours later the hostage was released and treated for a gunshot wound to the abdomen. Evidence would indicate he had actually assisted the suspect with reloading magazines during the shooting.

The suspect remained barricaded in the home for another 13 hours, shooting up meth and occasionally firing off rounds. He was finally taken into custody after an explosive breach, hot gas, Tasering and a struggle.

Months later while in county lock-up awaiting trial he took another hostage. Ultimately, he was sentenced to life in prison.

Evidence would show that he had been stockpiling ammo and weapons for weeks in preparation for his eventual encounter with the police. He was also an avid Internet student of police tactics and had worked out an elaborate plan to barricade himself in the home and ambush the police. In time it became clear our mission on that day had not been to perform a crisis entry/hostage rescue. The reality was we survived a preplanned ambush by a committed career criminal with nothing to lose.

STRAIGHT 8 PHOTO

"IS SHANE HIT?" I YELLED AS QUIET SECONDS TICKED BY. "NO, HE'S FINE." "WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOU HIT?" "NO. YOU GUYS SHOOT LIKE SHIT."

the team members place duct tape over the holes so our movements could not be tracked.

The explosive breachers came in, and I drew with my Sharpie on the wall a diagram of the bedroom's structures so they could assemble their charges. Preparations were already underway for another assault and a second team was rehearsing in an identical house they had appropriated a few blocks away. Inside that house they stumbled upon an illegal marijuana grow.

The energy in the living room was pensive and edgy as eight SWAT cops squatted at the ready. The quiet was broken when our suspect began yelling at us through the walls. His muffled ramblings caught us off guard as we looked at one another as if to say, "What do we do? Can we talk to him?"

It was a strange notion, as if it would be violating some unwritten rule to talk to the shooter.

"Are you hit?" I yelled, not convinced I should be talking to the man who just shot my friend. He disregarded the question and launched into a tirade.

"You failed to accomplish your objective," he said and then began to berate us on our failure.

Our objective? Who talks like this, I thought as I tried to think of something else to say.

"Is Shane hit?" I yelled as quiet seconds ticked by.

"No, he's fine."

"What about you? You hit?"

"No. You guys shoot like shit."

How did they miss getting hit through all that, I wondered. The suspect continued to ramble about our incompetence and how we all needed to leave or else and how he wanted to talk to his father.

By this time preparations had already begun for our withdrawal. We were to be relieved by Portland SERT. Regardless that I wanted to stay and finish the mission, I was well aware of the political realities of the situation.

TACTICAL OPERATIONS

Later that evening I visited Chris in the hospital. A single .45 bullet had entered the left armhole of his tac-vest, passed

These are glimpses of the scene that unfolded during the rescue.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SCOTT SCHANAKER

through a rib, perforated his lung and lodged next to his spine. Fortunately, the bullet had been ball ammunition. Had it of been a hollow point the outcome would have been very different indeed. Chris was released from the hospital two days later.

I made it home just after eight o'clock that night still feeling the euphoric affects of the massive adrenalin dump. A thousand thoughts swirled in my head of the personal mistakes I had made and the mistakes with the mission. We had done some things well, but there was much to be evaluated and much to reconsider with our training and the readiness of personnel.

The unpredictable world of law enforcement tactical operations had reared its ugly head, and I had once again managed to make it through unscathed. Much had happened in the 12 hours since my pager had gone off on that innocuous morning. The realization was a reminder that one ever knows when the seemingly mundane will turn into a long day off. **FP**

Scott Schanaker is a sergeant with the Clark County Sheriff's Office in Vancouver, Washington. Throughout his 24 years of service he has worked patrol, Major Crimes, SWAT and various administrative assignments.

He is the recipient of his agency's Medal of Valor and the Washington State Medal of Honor. Prior to law enforcement Scott was a veteran of the U.S. Army Reserve and served as an Infantry officer with assignments to Infantry, Special Forces and Psychological Operations companies. He is the author of the forthcoming Monk Assassin novels.

Did You Know?

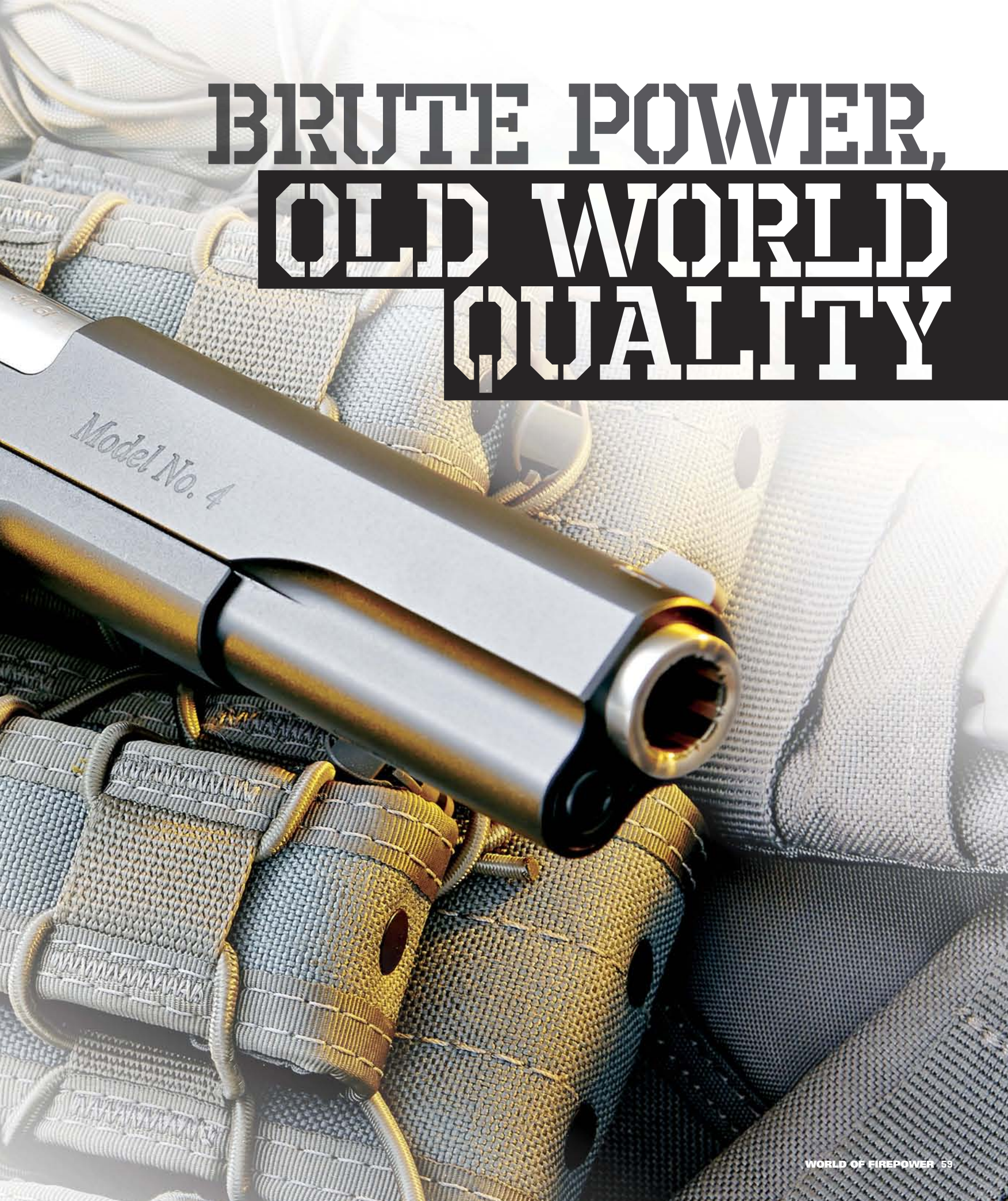
Part I ran in the January issue of Firepower magazine.

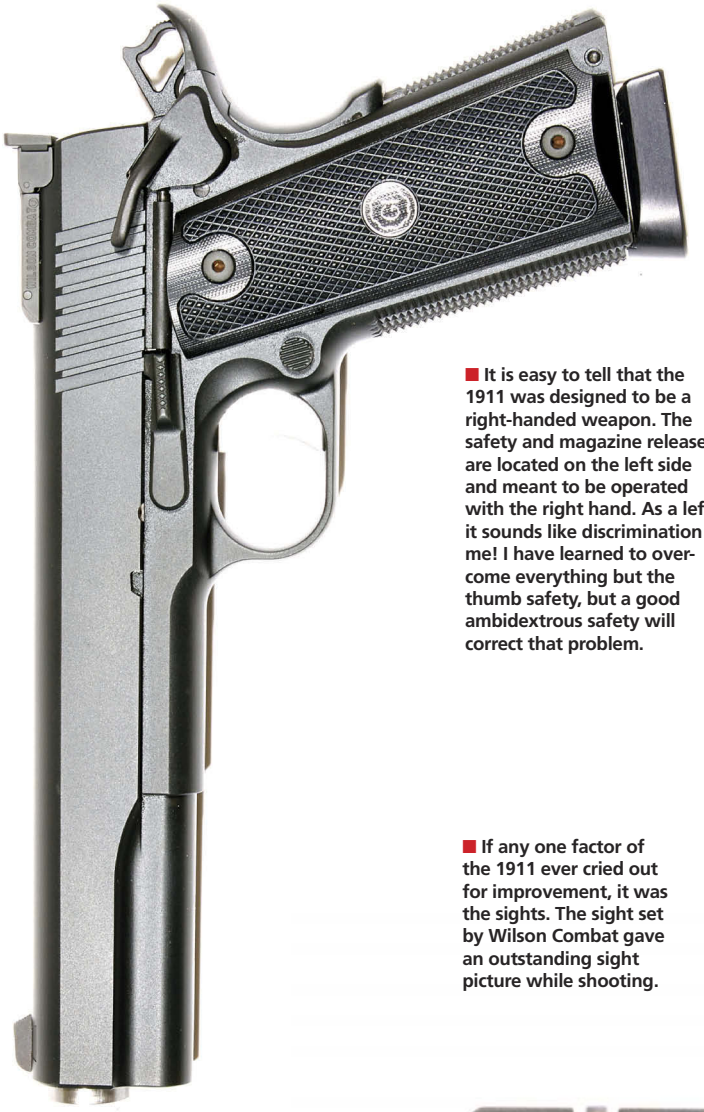
WORDS AND PHOTOS BY TERRILL HOFFMAN

GUNCRAFTER INDUSTRIES MODEL 4, CHAMBERED IN .50 GI, BOASTS ACCURACY AND RELIABILITY

RAW POWER IS NOT ALWAYS ENOUGH, BUT WHEN YOU MIX IT WITH RELIABILITY, YOU HAVE YOURSELF A WEAPON.

BRUTE POWER, OLD WORLD QUALITY





■ It is easy to tell that the 1911 was designed to be a right-handed weapon. The safety and magazine release are located on the left side and meant to be operated with the right hand. As a lefty, it sounds like discrimination to me! I have learned to overcome everything but the thumb safety, but a good ambidextrous safety will correct that problem.

■ The extra inch in the slide stands out, but even then the profile is unmistakable. There are only a few firearms such as the Colt SAA that have the allure to match the 1911. However, the 1911 stands alone in longevity and popularity.

■ If any one factor of the 1911 ever cried out for improvement, it was the sights. The sight set by Wilson Combat gave an outstanding sight picture while shooting.

Any time a group of gun enthusiasts gathers for a conversation, you can be assured that the clichés will start to fly hot and heavy.

Second only to the world of baseball, shooters will have a trite adage to cover just about any situation. When the discussion is centered on handguns, you can bet it won't be long before you hear one of my favorites: "I carry a .45 for one reason. They don't make a .46!"

Everyone knows, or they should know, that the Colt 1911 Government Model and its .45 ACP cartridge were introduced as a package, and it was the .45 ACP that helped the 1911 earn the reputation as being the ultimate fight stopper.

I am not one to fight tradition and this old saying came to mind as soon as I opened a box from Guncrafter Industries containing their 1911 patterned pistol, the Model 4. Before you start to think that I am going to say the Model 4 is a new .46 caliber weapon, I'll let you know that Guncrafter went a few steps further by chambering the Model 4 in the .50 GI cartridge.

.50 GI

Before we take a look at the Model 4, let's start with a quick glance at the .50 GI.

Developed by Guncrafter, the .50 GI was introduced at the 2004 SHOT Show along with the Guncrafter Model 1. The cartridge case has a rebated rim to match that of the .45 ACP, but the case is then expanded to .526 inches to allow the use of a .500-inch diameter bullet.

The case length of .899 inches is slightly

"I STILL TRY TO CONVINCE EVERYONE THAT I'M 'WORKING' EVERY TIME I'M AT THE RANGE."

The .50 GI round is flanked by a .45 ACP on its left and a 9mm on its right. The hollow point bullets used for the .50 GI are designed to readily expand, but this cartridge has an unfair advantage over the others. It is .500 inches in diameter to begin with.

GOOD VIBRATIONS

It was not the .50 GI chambering that first drew my attention to Guncrafter Industries. It was the visual perception I had of their handguns from the first time I saw one.

Over the 100-year lifespan of the 1911, it has been produced by numerous companies and with many variations and modifications. Many of these modifications have been improvements over the original basic design, but only a few companies manage to blend these changes together in such an eye pleasing manner. To be sure, Guncrafter Industries is one.

In 2004, Alex Zimmerman founded the company, which is based in Huntsville, Arizona. Since its inception, the company has taken an "old school" approach to quality and the 1911 pistol.

In this day of mass production, Guncrafter still manages to hand fit every component in an effort to create the ultimate handgun. The desire to produce a quality product has to be an inborn trait of a true craftsman, but Zimmerman had an advantage of working with one of the top gunsmiths in the world, Bill Wilson.

Wilson Combat's reputation for quality is unquestioned, and Zimmerman speaks highly of his chance to work for such a company. However, his desire to make what he envisioned as the most effective custom pistol for self-defense, and to create the .50 GI cartridge, led to his founding of Guncrafter Industries over a decade ago. Since that time, Guncrafter has added more models to include not only their .50 GI, but also .45 ACP, 9 mm, 10mm, and .38 Super.

■ **At heart the Model 4 is all 1911. It does incorporate changes developed over the 100-year life span of the 1911 Government Model. Most obvious is the lack of a barrel bushing, the grip safety and the two-piece full length guide rod.**

"IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT EVERY ASPECT OF THIS HANDGUN HAS BEEN TUNED FOR ACCURACY AND RELIABILITY."

shorter than the .45's, which allows a larger bullet to be used and have the overall length of the cartridge fit into the 1911 pistols. The pressure ratings are also maintained similar to that of the .45 ACP at around 15,000 psi. The sample handgun was sent in with four variations of the .50 GI with bullet weights varying from 185 grains to 300 grains.

MODEL 4

The Model 4 can be considered what has become known in the industry as a "Long Slide" 1911. The 5-inch barrel, which has long been standard for a 1911, has been lengthened to 6 inches. The extended barrel and slide offers an increase to the sight radius between the front and rear sights, but should also increase the velocity of the .50 GI cartridges.

The basic design principles and operation of the Model 4 matches those of the 1911 Government Model, but every part has been upgraded with the precision fitting by Guncrafter's craftsmen. The slide, frame and barrel are all machined forgings, while the hammer, sear and disconnector are machined from tool steel.

As a variance from the design of the 1911, the Model 4 has gone with a bushingless approach to fitting the barrel to the slide. The barrel diameter expands as it reaches the muzzle to provide a solid lock-up to the slide. The beaver tail or high sweep grip safety and beveled magazine well are examples of improvements made to the original 1911 and 1911A1 designs.

The Model 4 comes with angled cocking serrations at the rear of the slide, and the entire firearm has been fully dehorned.

The front grip strap and flat mainspring housing both sport 15 LPI (lines-per-inch) x 90 degree checkering. The trigger is a "solid" model while the hammer is a skeleton version. The standard finish for the Model 4 is a Parkerizing, and the grips are checkered black Aluma-Grips with the GI logo.

Finishing off the Model 4 is a Wilson Combat adjustable rear sight and Tritium front sight. It goes without saying that every aspect of this handgun has been tuned for accuracy and reliability. The handgun is supplied with two magazines that have also been tuned for function and a GI Logo Cordura pistol case.

ACCURACY TESTING

I have read that the .50 GI round has been known for its accuracy, but it is not until you actually try it before you really know how

In this rear view, you can see how the slide mates to the rails of the frame. Fitting these two parts together requires skill, or at least it does to do it properly. The principles of operation for the Government Model are simple enough, but it takes a craftsman to make sure it works well shot after shot.

You don't have to worry about fitting the barrel bushing if you don't have one. Bushing or not, the barrel requires a perfect fit to the slide if you are expecting consistent accuracy.

much is truth and how much is mere hype.

As I mentioned, the sample handgun came with a supply of ammunition ranging from 185 grains to 300 grains. There is always a time limit on how long you can keep a firearm for testing, but no one ever expects to get the ammunition back. Not knowing when my next chance to fire a .50 would be, I planned to shoot it all. Yes, there should be a "smiley face" after that last statement. I still try to convince everyone that I'm "working" every time I'm at the range.

Before I went to the chronograph for velocity measurements, I thought it wise to try a bit of off-hand shooting. Again, I had no idea if firing this thing was going to be brutal, and I didn't want shooting off of a bench to increase the pain. I can't say that it was the same as firing a .45 ACP, but the recoil was a lot less than expected. Compared to firing a small-frame .357 mag, the Model 4 was downright comfortable.

It was during my off-hand shooting that I came across my one complaint. I'm left handed, and I'm used to having ambidextrous safeties on my 1911's. If I were to order one for myself, I would make sure it had this feature. After realizing that I wasn't going to bounce my hands across the shooting bench, I began my true testing.

With a standard target set up at 25 yards, I shot 5-shot groups with each of the four loads using a sandbag rest. I can't swear that every firearm will shoot like the sample, but this one was truly outstanding.

My best group for the day came using the 185-grain load with a rated velocity of 1,200 feet per second. My velocity testing proved that the extra inch on the barrel was resulting in a real life velocity average of 1,307 feet per second. The group itself measured dead on 1 inch. It was at this point that I took a slight pause to strut for a few minutes.

After testing each load, it was apparent the all of the rated velocities printed on the boxes must have been measured using a standard 5-inch barrel. The lowest velocity increase was with the 275 grain load at an increase of 63 feet per second. I never matched the accuracy of the 185 grain load with the other samplings, but none of the groups for the day exceeded 2½ inches. The greatest span in velocity from one shot to the next was fired using the 300-grain load, and it was only 32 feet per second.

All of these results will attest to not only the quality of the Model 4, but to the quality of the ammunition and the Wilson Combat sights. There was not one failure to feed during the day of shooting.

■ It may seem simple, but just enlarging the ejection port and adding the rear bevel helped a great deal in preventing jams over the original design. It may sound like a no-brainer, but the small details separate one gun from another.

"I CAN'T SWEAR THAT EVERY FIREARM WILL SHOOT LIKE THE SAMPLE, BUT THIS ONE WAS TRULY OUTSTANDING."

FINAL THOUGHTS

When Alex Zimmermann started Guncrafter, his thoughts were centered on the concept of the ultimate defensive pistol/cartridge combination. However, Zimmermann was an avid shooting competitor and knew there were other uses for a handgun.

For those who would like to take the challenge of hunting with a handgun, they should find the Model 4 ideal for close-range deer and smaller game. The barrel length of 6 inches is the only feature that would lead me to think that this weapon is too large for a defensive handgun.

Guncrafter offers several models in both .50 GI and .45 ACP. They even offer conversion units to .45 ACP for those who have purchased a .50 GI. Any shooter should be able to find a Guncrafter 1911 that fits their needs.

As per my profession of writing about firearms, it is required that I throw in one more cliché.

"If you're going to a gunfight, make sure you bring enough gun!" Is a Guncrafter 1911 in .50 GI enough? There is no doubt about it; you're covered. **FP**

Terrill Hoffman, U.S. Navy veteran, has been covering the firearms and knives industries for decades.

HOW TO REACH THEM

WHO: Guncrafter Industries
ADDRESS: 171 Madison 1510, Huntsville, AR 72740
PHONE: 479-665-2466
WEB: GunCrafterIndustries.com

SPECS

Model 4

CALIBER: .50 GI
BARREL LENGTH: 6 inches
CAPCITY: 7 rounds
WEIGHT: 41 ounces (empty)
ACTION: Single action
SIGHTS: WC Adjustable Rear, Tritium Front
FINISH: Parkerized
MSRP: $4,125

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
50 GI 185 gr. CHP	1,307	1.00 inches
50 GI 230 gr. CHP	1,076	2.12 inches
50 GI 275 gr. JHP	938	1.75 inches
50 GI 300 gr. JHP	798	2.37 inches

Notes: Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity is average of 10 shots in fps measured 10 feet from muzzle, and accuracy in inches for the best five-shot group at 25 yards.

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MISSION READY

THE WEAVER 1-7X24 VARIABLE POWER TACTICAL SCOPE IS RUGGED, RELIABLE AND FEATURES EXCELLENT CLARITY

BY CAPT. JOHN N. RAGUSO

WERE YOU GOOD LAST YEAR?

IF SO, SANTA MAY HAVE BROUGHT YOU WEAVER'S NEW 1-7X24MM TACTICAL RIFLE SCOPE, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN A GREAT YULETIDE PRESENT FOR ANY OPERATOR WHO CARRIES A TACTICAL WEAPON IN HARM'S WAY OR FOR HUNTERS WHO PREFER MODERN SPORTING RIFLES WHEN VENTURING AFIELD IN SEARCH OF DANGEROUS GAME. THE SCOPE WAS INTRODUCED FOR THE 2014 HOLIDAY SEASON.

If you didn't get one, Santa probably opted to keep yours. Because it's so good, it's something you should consider for the New Year. Let's take a look at it.

INNER WORKINGS

Manufactured to the strictest tolerances, Weaver tactical scopes are built to perform in the harshest environments.

The new 1-7x24mm Tactical Scope features Dual-Focal Plane MDR technology that integrates the close-range, quick targeting of a second focal plane (SFP) illuminated dot with the medium-to-long range versatility of a first focal plane (FFP) mil-dot reticle. In this unique design, the SFP dot is slaved to the FFP etched-glass reticle to offer maximum versatility for competition, tactical and sport shooters.

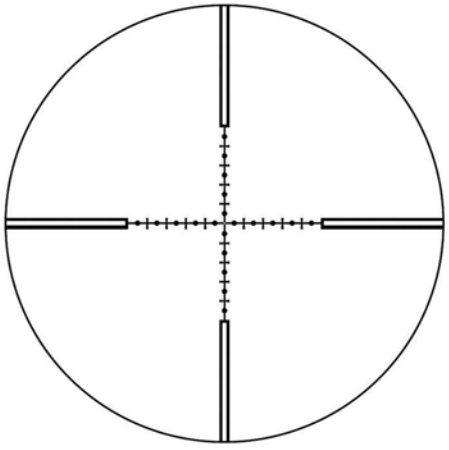
For close range, and super-fast target acquisition, the scope offers true 1x power and a 4-MOA, daylight-visible red dot that remains the same size at any power. This dot can be turned off for clear viewing of the Mil-Dot Ranging (MDR) reticle. The MDR reticle is placed in the first focal plane, so it sizes along with the image as magnification is increased or decreased.

Additionally, mil dot ranging calibrations are valid at any magnification. The MDR reticle features a classic crosshair overlay with a total of 10 alternating dots and hash marks at 0, 90, 180 and 270 degrees. So if your shots are farther downrange, the proven mil dot system will enable you to estimate the distance and the requisite holdovers for windage and elevation to put your rounds on target.

The scope has a rugged 34mm, one-piece tube and unique interchangeable magnification throw levers, allowing users easy adjustability for competition or mission-specific configurations. The Weaver 1-7x24mm Tacti-

"IT'S PERFECT FOR RAPID-FIRE CQB ENGAGEMENTS AND EQUALLY ADEPT FOR REACHING OUT AND TOUCHING BAD GUYS 200 TO 400 YARDS DOWNRANGE …"

The Weaver goes for about $1,700.



Manufacturer's Contact Info

COMPANY	PHONE
Weaver Optics	(800) 379-1732
ADDRESS	**WEB**
1 ATK Way Anoka, MN 55303	www.WeaverOptics.com

For close range and fast target acquisition, the scope offers true 1x power and a 4-MOA, daylight-visible red dot that remains the same size at any power.

cal's raised power change ring is easy to manipulate with either a gloved hand or commando with a bare grip and features a 180-degree rotation (from 90 to 270 degrees), providing infinitely variable magnification adjustments within its 1-to-7 range.

Two precision-machined accessory throw levers are included with the scope kit, designed to clamp on to the raised power change ring fin. Attaching either the short or the long throw lever will provide the additional leverage and grip to allow you to change power settings on the scope more rapidly and smoothly. There's a rotary diopter adjuster focus ring set into the aft end of the fin housing to compensate for each operator's unique vision requirements.

This scope does not come equipped with mounting rings, so you will need to get a pair of 34mm bases/rings to mount onto your weapon's Picatinny rail. I secured a set of Weaver Tactical 34mm rings that fit the 1-7x24 scope like a glove, with a total of six Allen screws in each ring cap, eliminating any play for a vise-like grip.

Other desirable features on this Weaver Tactical scope are the two extra battery compartments hidden in the false tops of the windage and elevation turrets, in addition to the positive connect/disconnect on the windage and elevation knobs. If you need to adjust for windage or elevation, simply unscrew the turret cap, push the adjustment knob down to engage the ratchet and make your required adjustments. Each click of windage or elevation is equal to 0.1 mil or approximately 0.34 inches. When you are done, pull the turret knob back up to disengage the ratchet style adjuster, replace the cap and you are good to go.

FINDING THE SWEET SPOT

Like many variable power optics, Weaver's 1-7x24mm Tactical does not offer unlimited eye relief and care must be taken during the initial set up to find its "sweet spot" and eliminate partial images and the dreaded "scope shadow."

When I was attempting to find the optimum mounting spot on my Rock River ATH carbine's Picatinny rail, 4-inches seemed to be the ideal distance for immediate target acquisition and a bright 100 percent image at all power settings. Taking this optimum positioning a bit further, I discovered that mounting the new Weaver Tactical anywhere from 4 to 5 inches would work with my eyesight and cheek weld, so there is some degree of flexibility on where you can position this optic on your weapon.

To get a better feel for its unique capabilities, I mounted the new Weaver Tactical on a variety of weapons, including a Rock River Arms LAR-15 ATH carbine and its big brother, the 7.62 NATO LAR-8. The 1-7x24mm Tactical also found its way on the rail on a Mossberg 590A1 Mariner milspec shotgun, in addition to a Mossberg MVP Predator in 7.62 NATO and a Ruger 10/22 Takedown model. I had to sell my Rock River LAR-9 9mm and Kel-Tec 40 S&W pistol caliber carbines recently due to NY's inane "Un-Safe" act, but this Weaver Tactical scope would have been a perfect fit with those weapons, too.

" … IS A RUGGED AND RELIABLE VARIABLE POWER TACTICAL SCOPE WITH EXCELLENT OPTICAL CLARITY THAT WILL FIT A VARIETY OF WEAPONS AND SUPPORT MULTIPLE MISSION REQUIREMENTS."

Once you get the hang of where to mount this fast acquisition optic on your weapon's rail and set up the appropriate check weld and eye relief, the target picture comes up quickly and with excellent clarity in just about any light condition. If you get into reduced visibility situations, the 11-power LED 4 MOA red dot will put you right back on-target with lethal efficiency.

A neat feature on the LED adjustment knob is the "off" detents that are equally spaced between the 11 levels of dot intensity adjustment. To turn it off and save the 3V battery, you simply dial the rotary knob to one of the many "in-between" detents so you can have the best of both worlds … instant off when you don't need the red dot designator and instant on to the favored power setting when you do … cool!

If you can't seem to find the correct elevation for your eye level, which will be determined by where your checkbone rests on the comb of your weapon's stock, Weaver offers an accessory Flat Top Riser Rail that will bolt onto Picatinny style rails, like the type found on A3 configuration AR-style flat top carbines and rifles. This beefy rail measures a full 7 inches in length and is manufactured from aircraft grade 6061-T6 aluminum that is hard-coat anodized for durability in the field. If your standard P-rail setup doesn't do it for you, this aftermarket accessory typically offers optimal mounting height and eye relief for putting the 1-7x24 Tactical scope into each operator's natural sweet spot.

RANGE READY

After mounting my sample Weaver 1-7x24 Tactical onto the Picatinny rails of a half dozen weapons for fit and feel, I physically range-tested it with my 5.56 NATO Rock River LAR-15 ATH middy carbine and 7.62 NATO Mossberg MVP Predator bull barrel bolt-action Sporter.

Using Hornady 68-grain and 75-grain BTHP Match ammo in the Rock River and Hornady 155-grain OTM and Federal 168-grain BTHP Match ammo in the MVP, I was able to print consistent 1-inch/5-shot groups with both weapons at 100 yards using the 7-power magnification and a slow-fire routine from a bench employing a Caldwell Tack-Driver beanbag rest. Switching over to rapid fire mode on the Rock Rive ATH carbine, my best 10-shot string printed 1.75 inches at 100 yards, which is plenty accurate for thinning coyotes and feral pig herds, or tangling with tangos and steel poppers at your next three-gun match.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The Weaver 1-7x24mm is a rugged and reliable variable power tactical scope with excellent optical clarity that will fit a variety of weapons and support multiple mission requirements. It's perfect for rapid-fire CQB engagements and equally adept for reaching out and touching bad guys 200 to 400 yards downrange with its 7X variable power capability.

With an MSRP of $1,739.99, it's not a "low cost" option, but it is a true professional's tool. **FP**

John N. Raguso has been writing about hunting and the shooting sports professionally for more than 30 years.

SPECS

Weaver 1-7x24mm Variable Power Tactical Scope

MAGNIFICATION: 1-to-7
OBJECTIVE LENS: 24mm
TUBE DIAMETER: 34mm
EYE RELIEF: 4 inches constant
FOCAL PLANE: First for Mil-Dot Ranging reticle; second for 4 MOA LED red dot
WINDAGE & ELEVATION ADJUSTMENTS: 1-click = 0.1 mil (0.34 MOA) @ 100-meters
DIMENSIONS: 10.75 inches L x 3.00 inches W x 2.25 inches H

During the testing, the author said that the Weaver performed like a champ. He was particularly impressed with its ruggedness and reliability.

ILLUMINATION SOURCE: Replaceable 3V CR2032 lithium battery
RED DOT: 4 MOA LED
BRIGHTNESS SETTINGS: 11
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: Made in Japan
MSRP: $1,739.99

HOW TO

DIALED IN

MOUNT AND ADJUST YOUR SCOPE WITH THESE EASY STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

The end result is a dialed-in scope.

Scope Specs

The new U.S. Optics, Inc. SR-4C riflescope is a versatile and rugged short-range rifle optic.

MAGNIFICATION: 1-4x
LENGTH: 9.25 inches
WEIGHT: 1.24 pounds
EYE RELIEF: 3.7 in
MSRP: $1,999

PHOTOS BY GUS ALONZO

YOU DID IT.

YOU JUST BOUGHT AN AMAZING SCOPE FOR YOUR RIFLE, AND IT'S TIME TO MOUNT IT AND ADJUST IT SO YOU CAN REALLY SHINE ON THE RANGE. IN THE FOLLOWING STORY, YOU'LL GET ALL THAT INFORMATION.

For this project, we have selected an American Defense Manufacturing AD-RECON mount and the SR-4C scope.

Before we begin, remember that firearms safety comes first, and it is always in your best interest to read the owner's manual for all of the products you will be installing onto your rifle. Now, let's roll.

Contact Information

Company: U.S. Optics
Address: 150 Arovista Circle, Brea, CA 92821
Phone: (714) 582-1956
Website: www.USOptics.com
Note: Tell them you saw the story in Firepower magazine.

1A

STEP 1

Place the riflescope into the optic mount (1a).

NOTE: It is very important to know that the bottom screws of the scope clamps must be fully threaded into the base before threading in the top screws. This will ensure that the threaded holes on the mount base will not be stripped out and will allow the scope to be rotated freely during the leveling process (1b).

For detailed installation instructions, refer to the AD-RECON owner's manual.

1B

2A

2B

STEP 2

Remove bolt carrier group from the rifle (2a). Place the rifle in a sighting rest (2b). The HySkore #30022 is being used for this job. Attach the riflescope mount to the MIL-STD-1913 rail (2c). NOTE: The scope mount must clamp onto a continuous rail surface. For an AR-15 based rifle like the YHM being used here, do not straddle the rail of the upper receiver and the modular MIL-STD-1913 forend with the scope mount. Movement between the forend and the upper receiver can cause point of impact shift of the optic.

2C

3A

3B

3C

STEP 3

Adjust the fit of the AD-RECON clamps per the manufacturer's specifications to apply proper clamp force (3a).

Position the riflescope on the upper receiver MIL-STD-1913 rail (3b). This may require removing, repositioning, reattaching and shoulder mounting the rifle a few times to obtain the best position for optimal eye relief and sight picture (3c).

STEP 4

Secure the rifle in the sighting rest (4a). A U.S. Optics, Inc. BBL-100 or BBL-300 Anti-Cant device is a great tool to use for leveling the rifle in the sighting rest. It is also a great tool on the range when trying to eliminate as many variables as possible for making well-placed, accurate shots.

Once the rifle has been leveled in the sighting rest, place a commercial grade bubble level on the top of the scope turret forward of the elevation knob on the riflescope (4b). Although this ensures that the scope body is level, the reticle must be checked and will ultimately determine the final position of the riflescope in the ring mounts (4c).

4A

4B

4C

STEP 5

Set an inch pound torque wrench to between 20 and 25 inch/pounds per the American Defense Manufacturing owner's manual (5a). The torque wrench used for this install is set to 23 inch/pounds.

NOTE: It is very important to know that the bottom screws of the scope clamps must be fully threaded into the base and tightened to the proper torque specifications prior to tightening the top screws. This will ensure that the threaded holes on the mount base will not be stripped out.

Tighten the top scope clamp screws to the manufacturer's torque specifications (5b). For best results always refer to the AD-RECON owner's manual.

STEP 6

Place a target or a piece of paper on a wall 25 yards away from sighting rest. The photos are for reference only and distance is not to scale. With the lower receiver hinged open, visually align the dot on the wall in the center of the bore (6a).

Use the windage and elevation knobs to adjust the reticle so that the red dot is centered (6b and c). The adjustment process is detailed in the U.S. Optics operator's manual.

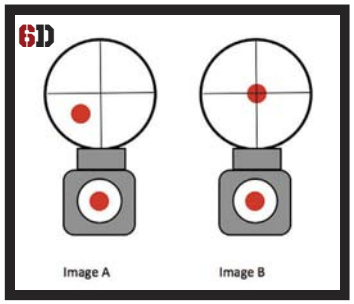
The bore sighting process is complete when the red dot is centered in the riflescope and also in the bore of the rifle. (6d).

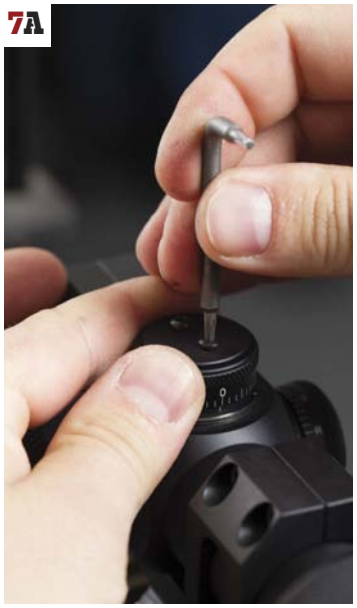
Next? Pack everything up for a day on the range, where you can make any final adjustments via the windage and elevation knobs after shooting an initial group on paper at 25 yards.

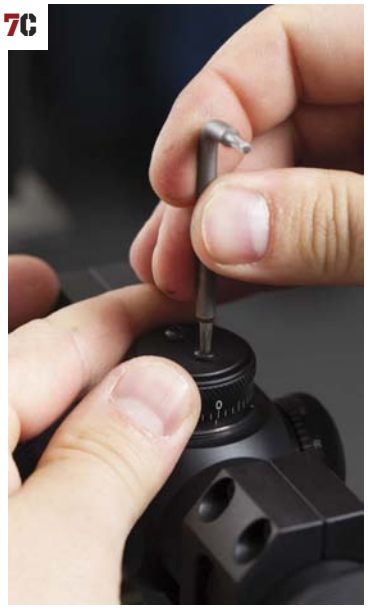
STEP 7

After shooting an initial group on paper at 25 yards, make any additional adjustments using the windage and elevation knobs to reposition the reticle (7a). Follow the U.S. Optics operator's manual to reset the knob drum(s) to the zero position (7b) and screw the knob covers on (7c). **FP**

Behind the Scenes
For their help, we would like to send a special thanks to the crew at U.S. Optics.







SUPER FIVE PACK

MUST-HAVE RIFLE SCOPES FROM $250 TO $2,125

▶ BY JOHN N. RAGUSO

SEEMS LIKE EVERY FIREARMS EXPERT HAS HIS OPINION ON WHAT CONSTITUTES "GOOD GLASS" FOR MODERN SPORTING RIFLES, PRECISION BOLT GUNS, SHOTGUNS AND HUNTING GEAR.

It's easy to recommend some high-end, mid-four-figure scope when you get a loaner sample and you don't have to buy it. But investing serious cash on an optic that might cost two or three times what you paid for your rifle will certainly give you serious pause. To complicate crafting a list of contenders, not all scopes have the same mission statement or are tasked to perform identical duties on similar weapons platforms, so the "Top 5" recommendation seems like a really daunting challenge.

But solving complex puzzles is my specialty, so I'm going to give my best shot at identifying some of the top-value, best-performing glass currently available to recreational, sport and professional shooters, ranging from $250 to just under $2,125.

1 NIKON

Company: Nikon
Model: P-223, 4-12x40mm, w/600-yard BDC, #8473
Web: Nikon.com
MSRP $249.99

Getting modern sporting rifle (a.k.a. AR-15 clone) owners into the optics game for a modest investment, Nikon's P-223 family of scopes offers prospective operators a diverse mix of useful capabilities. The specific P-223 model that caught my eye was the 4-12x40mm, which features a built-in BDC 600 reticle that provides 10 different aiming points for targets from 100 to 600 yards using a 55-gr .223 Rem projectile with a muzzle velocity of 3,240 fps.

Once you set the scope's crosshair zero to 100 yards, a quintet of stacked circles set under this initial zero guides the operator to subsequent aiming points at 200, 300, 400, 500 and 600 yards. Anything that might fall in between those round numbers is addressed via a quartet of hash marks positioned in the spaces between the circles, with perpendicular stadia lines indicating where your bullet will strike 250, 350, 450 and 550 yards downrange.

If you are not comfortable using circle and hash mark holdovers for your long-range shots and prefer the comfort zone of the crosshairs, the elevation turret offers pre-set positions for the same established distances from 100 to 600 yards, with the convenience of twisting the wheel to dial in your requisite distance to the target.

Once again, setting the initial zero at 100 yards is the secret to making it all work seamlessly. With a return-to-zero turret feature, fully multicoated optics and a limited lifetime warranty, you simply can't go wrong with this excellent starter scope for your AR-15 clone.

"DEDICATED LONG-RANGE RIFLEMEN WOULD HAVE SURELY PUT ME IN THEIR CROSSHAIRS IF I DIDN'T INCLUDE AT LEAST ONE LEUPOLD ON THIS LIST . . ."

2 WEAVER

Company: Weaver
Model: Grand Slam 3-12x42mm, EB-X Reticle (#800624)
Web: WeaverOptics.com
MSRP **$524.95**

I have field-tested dozens of mid-priced variable power rifle scopes over the years, and the Weaver Grand Slam series 3-12x42 is one of my favorites. The reasons why are many, but they include crystal-clear optical quality; precision ground, fully multi-coated lenses to provide clear edge-to-edge sight pictures; rugged one-piece tube construction that is Argon-purged to eliminate internal fogging; a handy side-focus parallax adjustment knob; and 4X magnification ranges to provide versatile optical performance.

I have mounted this Weaver Grand Slam on a variety of weapons, including a Ruger Mini-14, Rock River ATH middy carbine, Mossberg MVP (5.56 NATO and 7.62 NATO), Remington 700 SPS (.223 Rem and .308 Win) and a Ruger Gunsite Scout rifle (.308 Win), all with excellent results. Many of the 5-shot/1-inch 100-yard targets that I have printed for some of my weapons tests in other magazines have been courtesy of this affordable and sturdy scope that measures less than 12 inches in length and features 1/4-inch moa adjustments for both windage and elevation.

The Weaver EB/X BDC-style reticle features four different aiming points, allowing shooters to quickly engage targets that might be farther away than the scope's primary zero. Once setting the crosshairs for 200-yards, a handy ballistic chart included with each scope establishes the projected distance downrange for the other three aiming point zeros, depending on the caliber and projectile weight of your preferred load. The Weaver Grand Slam is backed by a limited lifetime warranty.

3 TRIJICON

Company: Trijicon
Model: RX34A-51 Reflex Sight, 4.5 moa amber dot, flattop mount
Web: Trijicon.com
MSRP: **$682**

Trijicon needs no introduction to serious sport, professional and military shooters. The company's reflex and magnified ACOG sights give our fighting forces a huge advantage in the fields of battle.

One of my fave Trijicons is its second-generation RX34 reflex sight, which features a wide 42mm objective lens with a wide field of view and excellent optical quality. I bought one of these two years back and liked it so much I bought another last year, but with a fast-connect lever mount!

Besides the unparalleled crystal clear view of the target with a practically unlimited eye relief and both-eyes-open targeting style, what I like the most about my Trijicon RX34s is the "no batteries required" feature to illuminate the 4.5 moa amber target dot. A built-in tritium element handles the dot illumination function in darkness, while the fiber optic array built into the top of the sight's beefy-machined aluminum frame handles this function during daylight hours.

I have employed my twin RX34s on a variety of weapons, including combat shotguns, AR-10s, AR-15s, Mini-14s, Kriss Vector, Rock River and Colt AR pistol caliber carbines, 7.62 NATO bolt action rifles like the Ruger Gunsite Scout and Mossberg MVP and more. If I had to take one sight with me to fight alien invaders, this would be the one. The lifetime warranty speaks volumes about the quality of all Trijicon products.

PEER INTO THE FUTURE

In the coming months, we'll discuss the optimum mission applications, features, benefits and specs with a dedicated review for each.

4 LEUPOLD

Company: Leupold
Model: Mark 4 ER/T 6.5-20x50mm M5 Riflescope, Mildot Reticle
Web: Leupold.com
MSRP: $2,124.99

Dedicated long-range riflemen would have surely put me in their crosshairs if I didn't include at least one Leupold on this list, so here's my fave Leupy for your consideration.

Leupold makes more precision rifle scopes for the U.S. military and police agencies than just about anyone else. Some are priced less than the Mark 4 ER/T and others are priced more. In my opinion, none gives you better value for your long-range dollars than this proven performer.

With a 30mm tube diameter, an overall length of 14.5 inches and a weight of only 22 ounces, this burley optic is light but strong and won't weigh you down when in the field or an a mission far from home base. An XT (Xtended Twilight) Lens System yields the clearest, brightest sight picture for exceptional target discrimination at all powers.

With a Mildot reticle in the front focal plane, you can range at all magnifications. A lockable, fast-focus eyepiece makes reticle focus simple to achieve and maintain while keeping the sight picture crisp and clear. The Mark 4 M5 features positive 1/10 milliradian click windage and elevation adjustments for fast and easy mil-based correction in the field.

Backed by Leupold's legendary quality, rugged construction and lifetime warranty, this Leupy is a winner and something all tangos should fear.

5 WEAVER

Company: Weaver
Model: Super Slam 5-20x50mm Tactical Series, Mildot Reticle (#800360)
Web: Weaver-Optics.com
MSRP $1,247.95

The Weaver Tactical 5-20x50 is serious glass for serious people in serious situations but without the snooty, stuck-up price tag. For the money, you would be hard-pressed to find anything in this Weaver's class, but don't take my word for it. Just visit the Internet chat rooms and the comments sections at some of the major online scope retailers. They tell the story better than I can.

The optical quality and ruggedness of this Weaver Tactical scope is first class. The side-mounted parallax adjustment knob really helps each operator dial in the best possible sight picture for their personal vision nuances. The first focal plane Mildot ranging system scale gets larger and smaller as you twist the beefy magnification dial power fin, allowing the user to estimate range-to-target and elevation/windage holdovers using this time-proven method.

The 30mm tube body gives this scope a nice heft and strength without being overweight. Measuring just under 15 inches LOA and weighing 28 ounces, the quarter-inch windage and elevation adjustments will allow each operator to fine tune shots downrange.

I have used this scope on my Rem 700 SPS, Savage Model 10 FCP and Arma-Lite AR31B (all .308 Win), and the targets never have a chance when I lay the crosshairs on the sweet spot, no matter what the distance.

Backed by a lifetime warranty, this Weaver Tactical is my No. 1 choice for long-range shots. **FP**

John N. Raguso has been writing about hunting and the shooting sports professionally for more than 30 years.

HOT WHEELS

HPR'S BLACK OPS JEEP RULES THE ROAD

BY DOUG JEFFREY / PHOTOS BY HENRY DEKUYPER

NO ONE EVER SAID BEING A PARENT IS EASY. JUST ASK RYAN NICHOLAS.

The national sales director for HPR Ammunition has the unenviable task of telling his young sons that they are not going to take the Black Ops Jeep for a spin to the local market. Or the post office, school or anywhere else for that matter. Ever.

"[THE JEEP] IS AN EYE-TURNING, CAPTIVATING EXPERIENCE FOR A LOT OF PEOPLE. IT'S PRETTY COOL." — RYAN NICHOLAS

Henry DeKuyper shot the HPR Jeep in the Arizona desert

"When my boys ask me if we can take the Black Ops Jeep somewhere, the answer is no," says Nicholas, chuckling.

But you can't blame the youngsters for trying. HPR's Jeep is probably the coolest set of wheels to set rubber on the hot Arizona pavement … if not the entire United States. When people see it, they notice.

"It turns heads," says Nicholas.

And it probably turns more heads than any lovely lady.

Shortly after the vehicle was built, Nicholas was driving along an Arizona freeway, and he noticed driver after driver either texting or taking cell-phone photos after they had seen the Jeep as he zipped along side them.

"It's an eye-turning, captivating experience for a lot of people," says Nicholas. "It's pretty cool."

For those lucky enough to see the vehicle up close at a show, the response is always the same.

"First, it's like a deer in the headlights," he says.

Once they refocus, they fire the same two questions his way.

"They all want to go for a ride, or they want to know if it is for sale," he says with a laugh.

HOW & WHY

The idea for the customized vehicle originated when the Arizona-based company was searching for ways to promote their new Black Ops product line.

"The marketing and sales people were all sitting around spit-balling and brainstorming ideas, and we all got behind the idea to investigate the idea," he says. "We decided to build it."

Nicholas says the marketing guy, David Anderson, is the "creative genius" behind the vehicle. He nailed the blueprint, and then company Cutting Edge 4x4 completed the work in about two months. When the Wrangler rolled off the "assembly line," Nicholas' reaction wasn't dissimilar from everyone else who was soon to set eyes on the rolling masterpiece.

"When I saw it, I thought it was epic, just epic," he says.

The Jeep, which started life as a 2014 Wrangler, debuted at the NRA show last May.

Did You Know?

The Mobile Command Center promotional truck, which transports the Jeep, is designed to generate brand impressions at events, and to support grand openings and promotions for dealers.

BLACK OPS AMMO

HPR's product development team had the Black Ops-branded ammunition on the drawing board for several years. Three years ago when they trademarked the name for its firearms category.

"We wanted high-end defensive rounds that were completely unlike anything the industry had ever seen, and that includes the packaging, the round and the performance," says Nicholas, of the ammunition that is for home defense and law enforcement. "We rebuilt this from the ground up."

As a result, the Black Ops bullet is not traditional hollow point, he says. It's an open-tip frangible. Once it hits soft tissue, the jacket and core separate.

"It creates a violent, mass force trauma effect," he says. "Plus, it doesn't overpenetrate because the jacket and core separate, so it won't go through the target or the next wall."

PERFORMANCE

The Jeep, like the ammunition, is right on target. Just ask Ryan Nicholas' sons. Or anyone else who has seen it. **FP**

SPECS

- Tera Flex suspension with Custom Coilover conversion
- Smittybilt XRC Armor side panels with custom Diamondplate blast protection
- Rigid Industry light bars
- Custom tailgate
- Katskin leather embroidered seats
- LED lights underneath
- Winch and front bumper
- Tactical slant back hardtop
- 40-inch tires/24-inch wheels
- Internal roll cage
- Sides have diamond plate cutouts and all custom

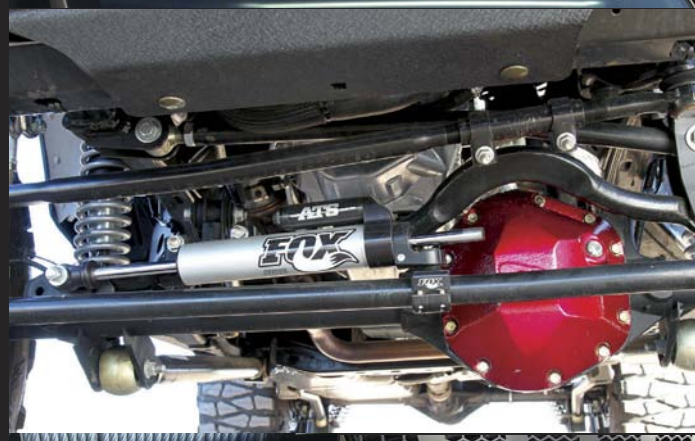
The Exterior
Arizona Color: Vehicle Wraps and Graphics (ArizonaColor.com) handled the tactical wrap.

The Bottom Line
$100,000
The cost to build the Jeep

The Jeep's Creator
NAME - Cutting Edge 4x4

Website
www.cuttingEdge4x4.com

Phone
(623) 587-9323



HPR Ammunition

WEB
www.HPRAmmo.com

PHONE
(928) 468-0223

ADDRESS
P.O. Box 2086
Payson, AZ 85547

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

A SERBIAN PISTOL THAT BLENDS THE BEST OF THE AR AND AK

BY TIM STETZER / PHOTOS BY JIM HOLMAN

"OUR GROUPS HOVERED IN THE 1.25- TO 1.50-INCH RANGE …"

I'M A CHILD OF THE '80S.

WHILE THAT ENTAILS THE USUAL GEN X CHARM OF JOHN HUGHES' FILMS AND MTV, I ALSO SPENT A LOT OF TIME WATCHING THE NEWS AND READING MAGAZINES AND I HAD A PARTICULAR INTEREST IN THE SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN. I EVEN WROTE MY SENIOR PAPER ON THE SUBJECT IN HIGH SCHOOL.

Something that always struck me from the period was the imagery of the Mujahideen rebels. One of the most iconic symbols of the conflict for me was the Russian AKSU-74, or "Krinkov" as it became known with gun buffs in the United States. Until recently, to get a civilian approximation of the Krinkov-style AK, you were looking at either a custom build or a very limited selection of factory guns and a federal tax stamp for a short barreled rifle (SBR). I've wanted one since the 1980s but never could scrounge up the cash for the gun itself and never felt like dealing with the tax stamp.

Well, in more recent years we started seeing AK pistols that approximated the AKSU-74. While those were pretty cool, they still didn't quite do it for me. Many came sans muzzle brake; while you could add one later, it was an additional step and cost, and they still lacked a buttstock.

The PAP M85 NP with the SB-47 brace makes for a compact and formidable package.

I've fired large pistols like that and always found them fun but hard to use without at least a third point of contact for your cheek. Well, just as the SIG SB-15 brace revolutionized the AR pistol market, Century's SB-47 brace is doing the same for AK pistols. When I saw the latest AK pistol from Century Arms, the Zastava PAP M85 NP with the SB-47 brace, I knew it was time to try one out.

FIRST LOOK

The M85 NP is a big pistol. It's essentially a Zastava M85 carbine in semi-auto trim without the folding stock.

Like its military brethren, the M85 NP is chambered in 5.56x45mm NATO, not one of the Russian rounds AK's are generally known for. The original M85's were built for export for users who wanted the NATO compliant round, and it's a good choice for customers in the U.S., where the 5.56 round is so ubiquitous.

Where the M85 NP differs from the original M85s and the 7.62x39mm M92 pistols is that it uses a mag well designed to take standard AR-15 magazines. This is again a great choice for the U.S. market where AR mags are so readily available and inexpensive. It also makes it an easy choice for a buyer who already owns an AR-15 and has a stash of mags on hand but would like to try an AK pattern system.

The M85 NP clocks in at a hefty 6.6 pounds and features a 10-inch barrel, a stamped steel receiver, a wooden handguard and a black plastic pistol grip in the standard Serbian style. All metal surfaces are treated in a matte black finish. The pistol uses a hinged top cover with a set of low profile sights, and the safety features a bolt hold open notch. A bell-shaped Krinkov-style muzzle brake finishes the pistol off. Overall length of the pistol itself is 21.5 inches. Adding the SB-47 Brace brings the overall up to a still very compact 29.5 inches.

THE SB-47 BRACE

Century Arms offers the SB-47 brace for AK series pistols, including the Zastava PAP pistols, the Romanian Draco pistols and Century's M39 pistol. It's made for them by SB Tactical and utilizes the SB-15 style brace mounted to an adapter that bolts onto an AK pistol via an extension that slides underneath the AK pistol grip. It's fairly solid, although not as solid as a real buttstock would be. Of course, you have to keep in mind that it isn't intended to be a buttstock, just an arm brace. Used in their intended fashion, they do indeed help hold up the substantial weight of the PAP pistol, but they do lock the hand in place and make it just about impossible to access the safety, mag release and charging handle of the weapon with the firing hand.

When used in the traditional manner, I still find the M85 NP to be a load when extended one handed at arm's length. Heartier souls than I may disagree. I found that it worked best with the gun cocked at an angle sideway and pulled in so that I could get on the sights while my left handed supported the handguard of the weapon; this was still a bit awkward, but it was doable.

The other method I used was to bring the weapon up to eye level without strapping the SB-47 brace onto my arm and just rest my cheek along the brace to add a third point of contact on the pistol without actually shouldering it, much like you would do with an AR-15 pistol with a buffer tube.

The M85 NR uses a hinged top cover instead of a removable one like on a standard AK-pattern rifle or pistol.

RANGE TIME

I went to the range with my buddy Ian on a cool November day with temperatures hovering in the high 40s. We settled down on the 25-yard pistol range at my local gun club and proceeded to sight the pistol in.

Out of the box the PAP was hitting about 8 inches high and a few inches to the left. The rear sight on the pistol is a simple flip up, two-dot sight with two settings marked 200 and 400. It is not adjustable for windage or elevation. All adjustment on the M85 is done with the front sight, just like any other stock AK.

Not having sighted an AK in for years I did not have an AK sight adjustment tool handy. Luckily, AK's are pretty simple creatures and some whacks with a Micarta mallet and turning the front sight screw with a set of pliers on a Leatherman worked just fine, and we soon had the pistol sighted in.

Now, you might ask why we sighted in at 25 yards and not 50 or even farther out. After all, while this is a pistol, it's also a 5.56 pistol with a 10-inch barrel. Honestly, we decided to stick to 25 yards because of the sights. They're functional but they're very simplistic. The notch is tight, and we had a tough time getting a good sight picture.

After chronographing our test ammo, we settled down on the bench and fired the M85 from a sandbagged rest at 6-inch

Contact Info

COMPANY:
Century Arms
ADDRESS:
430 South Congress Ave., Suite 1, Delray Beach, FL 33445
PHONE:
(800) 527-1252
WEB:
www.CenturyArms.com

The M85 NP field strips just like any other AK. It maintains the simplicity and durability of the AK system.

black circles at 25 yards. We used a 6 o'clock hold and basically dotted the "I" by placing the target dot at the top of our sight post.

Our groups hovered in the 1.25- to 1.50-inch range for the most part, and I think we could have kept things tighter still with better sights or the addition of a red dot sight. While this wasn't bad at all, working with the M85 this way was almost like work, and this gun isn't really designed as a target piece; it's much more at home being fired dynamically away from the bench.

The rest of the shooting we did standing or kneeling at man-sized targets or picking off clumps of dirt and bits of shattered clay bird off the back stop. As mentioned earlier, shooting with the brace strapped to your arm takes some getting used to it. We found that we much preferred to use it like you would an AR pistol buffer tube by bringing the pistol up to eye level, grasping the forend with your support hand and pistol grip with your strong hand, and resting your cheek along the brace itself. It allowed us to maneuver the pistol quickly at close quarters and get on target fast. Pulling it into the shoulder would be better still but with the legal vagaries being up in the air right now we couldn't recommend it. Still it was easy to make fast accurate hits this way on the 25-yard range and even on the 50-yard range. At 50 yards we didn't bench the M85 for groups but found that it performed well on real world shooting, engaging silhouette targets and again picking off targets of opportunity on the backstop.

It did plenty good for defensive shooting. For close-quarters shooting, the pistol also worked well in a high tuck position with the arm brace secured between your elbow and body.

Overall handling characteristics were good, and recoil was negligible between the weight of the weapon and the modest recoil of the 5.56 round. The Krinkov muzzle brake likely helped as well, as muzzle rise was minimal.

The SB-47 mount leaves a couple of hard corners just above the pistol grip, and initially I thought they might be bothersome when shooting. Once I was on the range though, I found that I didn't even notice them. I liked the Serbian pistol grip and found it to be more hand filling and comfortable than the traditional Russian-style grip.

The bolt hold open notch in the safety was a welcome touch, and I liked being able to lock the bolt back and show the weapon was clear when we weren't actively using it.

Being able to use AR-15 magazines with the M85 was a big bonus. The 5.56 AK magazines have always been harder to find and more expensive than their 7.62x39mm counterparts. The Zastava pistol ships with two Tapco polymer AR magazines and will accept pretty much any other AR mag you have. I tested mine with Brownells aluminum mags and Magpul Gen II and Gen II magazines. The one thing I will note is that the mag well is a bit snug with most mags. The Tapcos actually worked well, but I found that that the aluminum mags were snug as were the Gen II Magpuls.

Mags would generally not drop free from the gun and had to be pulled free with the support hand during reloads. After the gun was broken in a bit, I could sometimes get the Tapco mags and Gen III Magpuls to drop with a slight shake of the gun when I depressed the magazine release.

It's also worth noting that the magazine release is affixed to the side of the mag well extension in much the same place and operates in the same manner as a regular AR mag release. The distance between the grip and the button is a little longer than on an AR though. I had to stretch a bit to reach the release with my index finger although my buddy Ian, who has

The SB-47 brace has some square edges to it that the author initially felt would be uncomfortable. He found out, though, that he didn't even notice them when using the pistol on the range.

"OVERALL HANDLING CHARACTERISTICS WERE GOOD, AND RECOIL WAS NEGLIGIBLE …"

SB-47 Brace and the ATF Firearms Technology Branch

While reading this piece you may ask why am I not just shouldering the PAP M85 NP with its nifty brace? After all, the March 2014 letter from the ATF Firearms Technology Branch (FTB) essentially said that ATF only rules on the legality of parts; it doesn't tell you how to use them. This opened up the floodgates for users, including this writer, to presume that it was, in fact, OK to fire your pistol from the shoulder using an SB-15, or in this case an SB-47, brace. No it isn't a stock and isn't intended to be one but it does work to help stabilize your pistol and make it more controllable, safer and more accurate if you fire with the brace against your shoulder. However, just before press time the FTB came down with a new ruling on the stabilizing braces that supersedes any previous letters issued. The ruling is that "any person who redesigns a stabilizing brace for use as a shoulder stock makes a NFA firearm when attached to a pistol with a rifled barrel under 16 inches in length or a handgun with a smooth bore under 18 inches in length." They define redesign as "to alter the appearance or function of." While I could see a host of lawyers arguing over the definition of "alter" in that ruling for now at least, that is the word from ATF. Here's a further quote from the full letter, which can be found on the ATF.gov website:

"The pistol stabilizing brace was neither "designed" nor approved to be used as a shoulder stock, and therefore use as a shoulder stock constitutes a "redesign" of the device because a possessor has changed the very function of the item. Any individual letters stating otherwise are contrary to the plain language of the NFA, misapply Federal law, and are hereby revoked.

Any person who intends to use a handgun stabilizing brace as a shoulder stock on a pistol (having a rifled barrel under 16 inches in length or a smooth bore firearm with a barrel under 18 inches in length) must first file an ATF Form 1 and pay the applicable tax because the resulting firearm will be subject to all provisions of the NFA."

So, regardless of what we may have thought for most of the past year, this is the final ruling from the ATF unless some future legal challenge alters that. All I can say is if you're interested in a stabilizing brace use the product how it's intended to be used by the manufacturer.

larger hands than me, didn't have an issue.

Reliability was very good, although I had some feed issues with the aluminum 20-round mag from the bench initially, so I set it aside and worked with the polymer mags the rest of the day without incident. The Tapco mags the gun shipped with were 100 percent reliable, and I used those for most of the shooting session. The M85 fed everything it was given, including multiple hollowpoint loads.

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

If you're like me and have always admired the Krinkov style AK, then it's well worth checking out the M85 NP from Century Arms. It's a solid, reliable pistol that combines AK durability with the convenience of the 5.56 cartridge and an AR-15 compatible magazine well.

The short size makes it quite suitable for a truck gun or home defense piece. You can buy it either as a standalone pistol or with the SB-47 brace. MSRP for the pistol alone is $534.99 and the SB-47 brace is $149.99. **FP**

Tim Stetzer, who was born and raised in western Pennsylvania and has been an avid camper since the age of 12, was in the Boy Scouts and has served in both the U.S. Army Reserves and Air Force Reserves. He has worked as a police officer for more than a decade, much of that time as a detective. Tim—who enjoys shooting, knife collecting, hiking and craft beer—has been writing professionally since 2006 and helped found the online outdoor magazine, Woodsmonkey.com.

Did You Know?

For the purists out there, the M85 NP isn't really a "Krinkov." It's not made in Russia, it isn't chambered in 5.45x39mm and it doesn't even use AK magazines. It is, however, an AK-pattern pistol in the Krinkov style.

The M85 NP is made in Serbia at the famous Zastava plant, which has been making military arms since the mid 1800s. Zastava has a reputation for producing excellent quality weapons, and they've long been considered to be some of the better AK's made.

The M85 NP is 100 percent Serbian made because pistols do not fall under the Federal 922(r) compliance regulations so no U.S. parts are required for import. What that means to you is that you get an original factory gun built the way the manufacturer intended it to be.

The M4 Micro Rig from SOE Gear keeps mags and other gear close to the body and easy to get to. It worked well with the M85 NP pistol.

SOE Gear Micro Rig

The Zastava M85 NP makes a perfect truck gun, but if you're going to use it that way, you need to be able to keep it fed on the move. A compact rig like the M4 Micro Rig from SOE Gear is just the thing.

The Micro Rig is an extremely well-built chest rig that will carry four spare AR/M4 magazines ready to go and in easy reach. There's also a large utility pocket plenty big enough for a trauma kit, flashlight or other accessories such as batteries for a weapon light or sight. A Velcro map or document pocket sits behind the main pockets, but it's also a great place to clip a knife or even mount a holster for a sidearm.

SOE Gear is built tough right here in the USA and has been tested the world over. The M4 Micro Rig runs between $100 and $130, depending on what options you pick, and it's available in left and right hand models and in a variety of colors.

If you decide to pick one up, be patient with your order. Typical delivery time is six to eight weeks, and SOE Gear gives priority to military orders. These aren't mass produced pouches being cranked out in a factory in Asia; these are solid custom-built pieces that are made to last. They're well worth the wait.

Contact them at www.OriginalSOEGear.com.

Aside from the 5.56 chambering itself what makes the M85 NP unique is the mag well adapter that allows this AK to use standard AR-15/M4 magazines. It gives you the ruggedness of an AK with the convenience of readily available AR mags and 5.56 ammo.

SPECS

Zastava M85 NP

CALIBER: .223/5.56mm
WEIGHT: 6.6 pounds
BARREL: 10 inches
OAL: 21.5 inches; 29.5 inches with SB-47 brace
STOCK: Serbian black polymer pistol grip and wood forend
MAGAZINE: 2, 30-round Tapco polymer AR-15 magazines
FINISH: MIL-Spec matte black finish
ORIGIN: Zastava Arms, Serbia
MSRP: $534.99

ACCURACY TESTING, ACCURACY RESULTS

LOAD	ACCURACY	AVERAGE VELOCITY
TulAmmo 55gr FMJ	1.5″	2,424 fps
Hornady V-MAX 55gr	1.25″	2,421 fps
Hornady Match 75gr BTHP	1.25″	2,053 fps
Winchester 55gr FMJ	1.5″	2,626 fps
Winchester Match 77gr BTHP	1 7/16″	2,128 fps
Liberty Silverado 55gr HP	1 7/16″	2,465 fps

NOTE: All shots fired at 25 yards from a sandbag rest. Ambient temperature 48 degrees. Group size is the best of five shot groups fired.

The Zastava M85 NP would serve well as a truck gun or bug out gun. It's compact, reliable and powerful.

TACTICAL

EDGE

OPERATOR GLOVES FOR ANY ENVIRONMENT

WORDS BY BRET PERCHALUK
IMAGES BY CHRIS WINTON-STAHLE

WHEN YOU'RE LOOKING FOR PROTECTION IN A TACTICAL SITUATION, THERE AREN'T MANY OPERATORS THAT WILL SKIMP ON QUALITY GLOVES.

Yes, all the weapon gadgets and Molle pouches full of magazines and tactical gear are important, but without your hands you can't utilize those tools. So it's imperative to protect our digits in the field and on ops.

With so many gloves out there, how do you know which ones to buy? Well, lucky for you we decided to gather up some of the top gloves in the game and minimize the confusion by reviewing them and recommending the application for each pair.

So check out this simple buyer's guide and then get your hands protected and back in the fight!

BLACKHAWK

1 BLACKHAWK

MSRP: $69.99

Product: ECW Pro Winter Operations Gloves
Website: BlackHawk.com

If you operate in cold climates or even occasionally find yourself in the snow, then you need these gloves.

The dry comfort technology meshed with a fleece lining will keep your hands warm on patrol or during surveillance. The nylon waterproof shell will keep your hands dry even when the elements want them to be soaked to the bone.

These aren't just winter gloves; they have tactical application as well. The knuckles are reinforced with leather padding ito protect the hands from hard impacts and minor cuts. The textured palm and fingertips give a great cold- or wet-weather grip to draw and retain a weapon. They also include a low profile, box designed index finger to make pulling the trigger as easy as one, two, bang!

A nice little added bonus is one of the thumbs is equipped with a built-in squeegee for your smartphone swiping. And if you're worried about the glove slipping off, then worry no more because the glove comes with a strap around the wrist area that can be cinched down for tightness and then another one higher up toward the forearm to ensure extra tightness and waterproof sealing.

QUICK SPECS

- Breathable, waterproof Hipora Beta liner
- Textured palm and finger reinforcement for secure grip and durability
- Goggle squeegee on left thumb
- Water-resistant, breathable Eclipse EP nylon shell
- Shirred wrist with quick-release cinch strap
- Drawstring-adjustable gauntlet with internal snow cuff
- Lean trigger-ready index finger
- Easy-off pull tab on middle finger

I am steel. I am rock. I am man.

I AM MY WILL

STEEL WILL
KNIVES

www.steelwillknives.com

LINE OF FIRE

"INTEGRATED INTO THE PALM IS THE LINE OF FIRE GRIP SYSTEM, WHICH GIVES THE GLOVE THE MOST INTENSE GRIPPING CAPABILITY . . ."

LINE OF FIRE

MSRP: $123.10

Product: Recon
Website: LOFTactical.com

If you're a door kicker or inclined to serve warrants, then you need these gloves.

The Recon is a short-cuffed, multipurpose Nomex and cowhide, hard-knuckled glove. This glove is unique as it is form-fitting due to the leather and fire-resistant Nomex. You can't beat that!

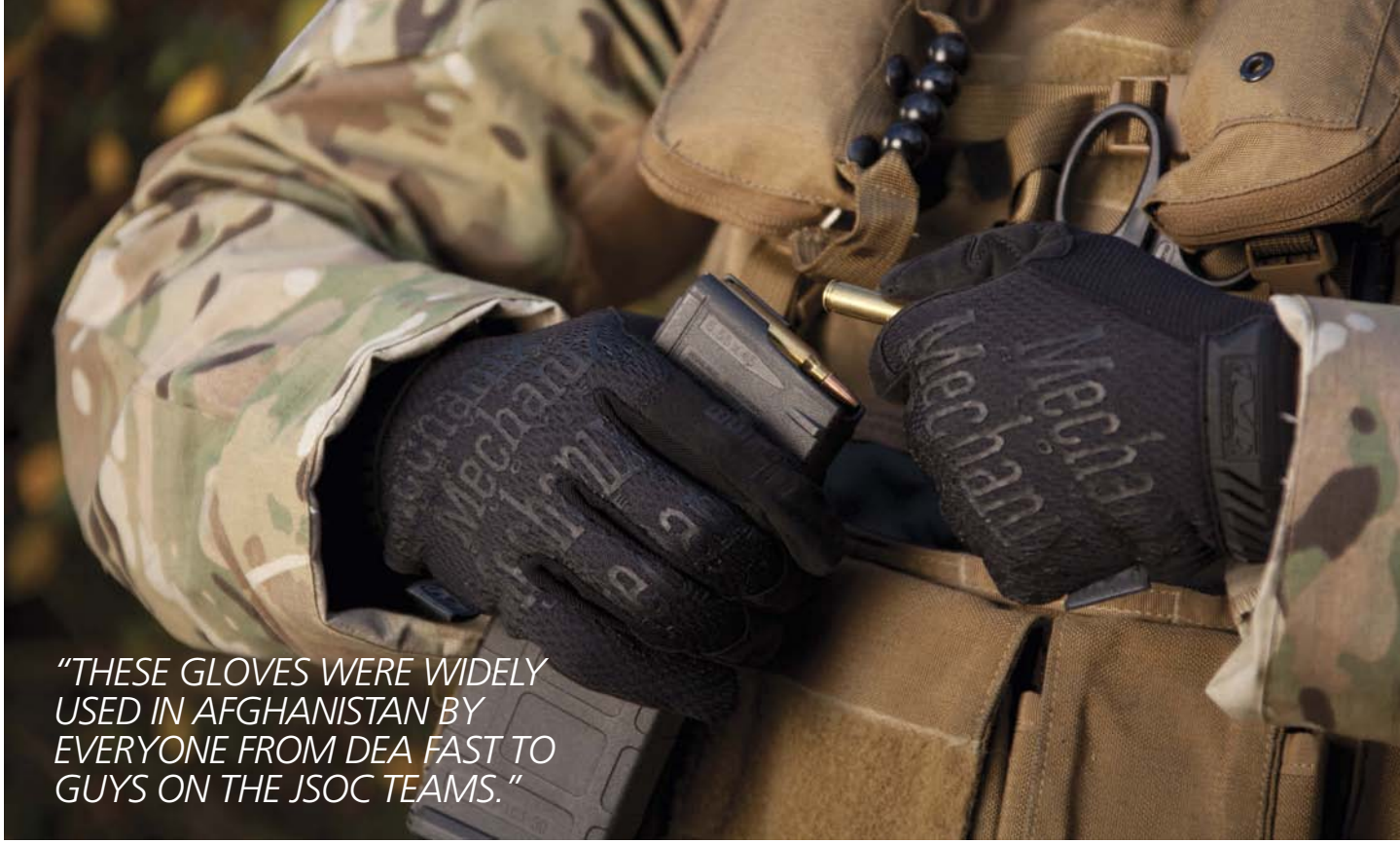
Integrated into the palm is the Line of Fire Grip System, which gives the glove the most intense gripping capability when you need to maintain positive control of your weapon system. The hard knuckle system is abrasion- and impact-resistant while the trigger finger is overwrapped in leather for a seamless fit.

One of the most impressive features of the glove is the finger dexterity, making it a perfect glove for the operator in the stack moving dynamically. An added bonus to these gloves is the free roll of TEGS tape that comes with them. This is a tape that can be applied to surfaces that you might grip with these gloves, such as your firearm's pistol grip.

The interlocking system that works in conjunction with the gloves will only increase your grip in dry and wet environments; it gives you that extra edge in the field when you need it the most.

QUICK SPECS

- TEGS superior grip in both wet and dry conditions
- Flexible, abrasion and impact-resistant knuckles
- Velcro wrist strap for cinch fit
- Contains 100% Nomex for fire resistance
- Leather overwrap trigger finger for seamless comfort
- Exceptional finger dexterity
- Durable construction
- Pre-curved design conforms to hand
- Dual-purpose interior glove clip and pull loop



"THESE GLOVES WERE WIDELY USED IN AFGHANISTAN BY EVERYONE FROM DEA FAST TO GUYS ON THE JSOC TEAMS."

3 MECHANIX WEAR

MSRP: $27.95

Product: .5mm Original
Website: Mechanix.com

If you need to be in an austere environment and need a reliable glove that can get dirty (sans bells and whistles because they get real work done), then you need the Mechanix Wear originals in your arsenal ...or go bag.

These gloves were widely used in Afghanistan by everyone from DEA FAST to guys on the JSOC teams. The lightweight and breathable mesh top, coupled with a micro suede-like material, make these some of the most desired high-dexterity gloves. The grip ability is great, and the rubber reinforced Velcro closure ensures that they stay on tight.

They also come with a great pull loop on each glove near the wrist that can not only be used to pull the gloves on fast but also be easily hung from a carabiner. These gloves are perfect for anyone trying to keep it simple while staying tactical.

QUICK SPECS

- 0.5mm high-dexterity palm provides precision feel
- Form-fitting TrekDry material helps keep hands cool and comfortable
- Thermal Plastic Rubber (TPR) closure with hook and loop provides a secure fit
- Reinforcement panels in high wear areas provide added durability
- Machine washable

" … IF YOU NEED AN EVERYDAY GLOVE, THESE ARE YOUR BEST BET."

4 PATROL INCIDENT GEAR

MSRP: $41.95

Product: Full Dexterity Tactical Glove with Alpha Touch Technology
Website: PatrolIncidentGear.com

These gloves provide a low profile dream!

If you need a light glove that affords protection or search capability while keeping it tactical for firearms use, then the PIG FDT is the glove for you. This glove is a wonder, starting with the man-made Clarino leather used for the palms. The leather adds to your grip and ensures that the gloves fit snuggly to the hand and mold to fit the operator.

The mesh knuckle area includes a built-in knuckle guard much like those used under hand wraps for boxing; they offer protection without the bulk. A nice little hidden feature is that the same padded protection runs down the side of the pinky and knife-edge of the hand. Why is this good? Because boxer's fractures happen down the pinky side of the hand due to lack of compression and protection, so whether you are clipping a bad guy or rapping on a door on a knock-and-announce, this added feature is clutch.

Now here's the best feature. Everyone knows when you need a tissue on an op one is never there (and probably not the time to be looking for one), so the PIG FDT comes with a micro-suede thumb area meant for wiping your running nose when it needs to be done now (or preferably before you take your place in the stack). They also have fibers woven into the index and thumb so that you can use that trusty smartphone when you're on surveillance.

The gloves also come with a low profile Velcro closure and built-in low profile pull tabs both designed for maximum comfort.

So if you need an everyday glove, these are your best bet.

QUICK SPECS

- Single layer multi-piece palm is designed specifically so that only one layer of material contacts your shooting grip
- The gloves feature a sensitized and isolated trigger finger
- Inside forschettes are ventilated for maximum wicking
- For durability, the outer forschettes are Clarino
- Low profile hook closure reduces abrasion on clothing
- Dual flex joint trigger finger provides maximum flexibility where you need it most

5.11 TACTICAL

5 5.11 TACTICAL

MSRP: $94.99

Product: Screen Ops Tactical Series
Website: 511Tactical.com

These gloves are the ultimate glove for operators or patrol guys who need to keep gloves on for all or most of the day but still need to tend to business.

For example, they are made from U.S.-made Kevlar to prevent slash-and-flash injuries, so handling that knife or firearm close to the barrel is no problem. The palm's grip is reinforced by tough goatskin leather to ensure that slip issues are non-existent. If you're worried about slamming your hand into hard things like walls, doors or resisting violators, the goatskin leather is also on the knuckles over a built-in knuckle guard pad.

The unique fabric and fibers stitched into every single finger allows the wearer to be able to use any touchscreen device with ease. That means that if you're using your iPhone, iPad or touch screen ToughBook you will be able to function fully. Yet these gloves do not compromise any dexterity so you can probably hit your target on the range.

Topped off with the built-in pull-tab and leather/Velcro closure system, these gloves fit … like a glove. These gloves are a great addition to any go bag, range bag or daily kit. **FP**

QUICK SPECS

- Built from Kevlar, goatskin and perforated leather
- Seamless palm
- Secure hook and loop closure
- Closed gusset

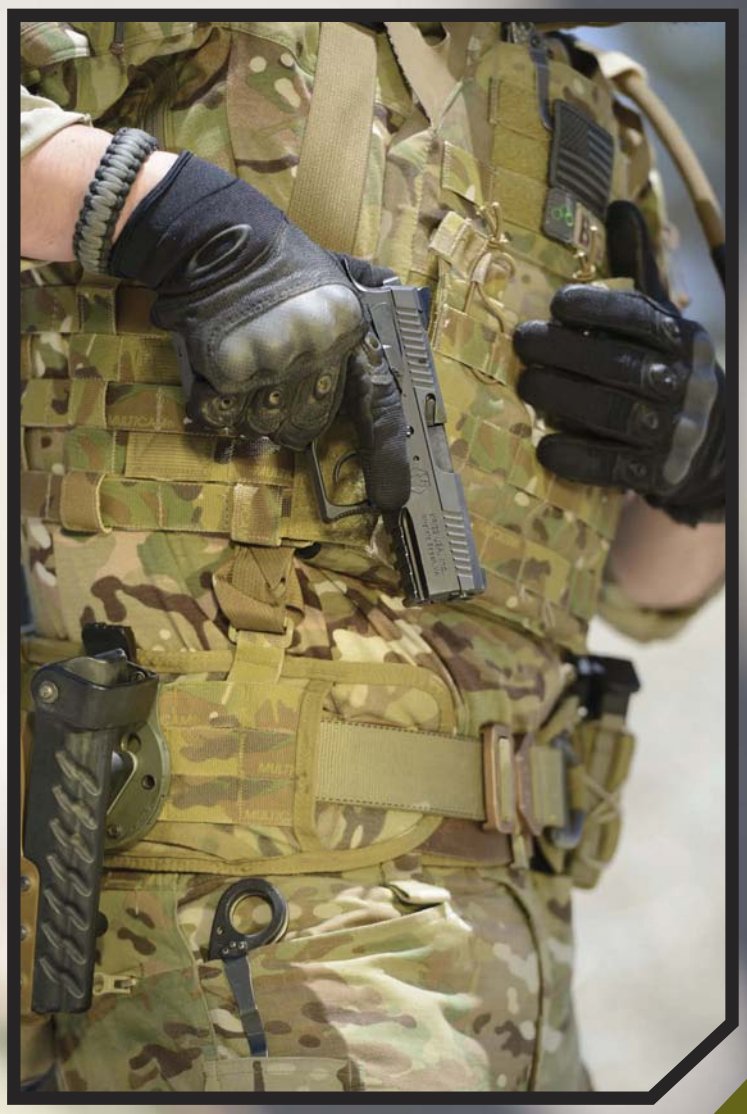
Bret Perchaluk has worked with law enforcement and special operations personnel in both a training and field operations capacity. This has given him insight into the needs and demands of the men and women putting their lives on the line.

X300
ULTRA

ALL-NEW SPHINX SPD

SWISS QUALITY, WITHOUT THE COST

BY BREANNA ARMSTRONG / PHOTOS COURTESY OF KRISS



DOES SPHINX 3000 RING A BELL? The SPHINX 3000 pistol was popular in the late 1990s because of its intricate formula, tight tolerances and attention to detail perfected by master gunsmiths. The 3000 was a hot commodity, but not many of the well-crafted pistols were available.

"Since each component of the SPHINX 3000 was machined from billet then hand fitted, they were extremely expensive to produce and sell," says Tim Seargeant, marketing manager at the KRISS USA Inc. in Virginia Beach, Virginia. "Despite the high price tag and wait times, SPHINX was never able to produce enough pistols to keep up with demand."

That all changed when SPHINX became part of the KRISS Group. The 3000 was retired and a new model, the SPHINX SDP, was created to make a more affordable and available version of the 3000's formula.

THE SDP

SPHINX, with its Swiss precision and quality workmanship, has been carried faithfully by Special Operations Units from all over the world. And years of developing and molding and perfecting each gun have made it reliable.

"The SDP shares many of the characteristics that made the SPHINX 3000 a fantastic pistol," Seargeant says. "The craftsmanship is similar, the accuracy is comparable and the ergonomics have been improved. The components are still machined from billet and the parts are still fit together by hand, so you still get a great quality gun without paying $3,500 for it."

The inherent design of the CZ75, which the SPHINX pistols are based on, is unique from most firearms in that the slide rides inside the frame as opposed to around it, Seargeant says. Additionally the guide rails between the slide and frame run the entire length of the pistol.

"That abundant amount of contact between the slide and frame, in conjunction with precision fitment between the two, is a major factor for precision accuracy," he says.

THE HISTORY

SPHINX was established in 1876, and in the 1980s the company switched from making precision tools to firearms. When SPHINX made that transition, they integrated precision machining, tight tolerances and fine craftsmanship that had already been established for over a century, Seargeant says.

Applying that to firearms is not something that happened instantly, he says.

"The discovery that was made over the years was identifying the crucial points of the pistol's design that contribute to its accuracy and perfecting that geometry," Seargeant explains.

"Consistent barrel lock up to the slide, precision fitment between the slide and frame, and proper support from the frame to the locking bar and barrel cam are all crucial areas for precision fitment because most of these parts move during the pistol's cycle," he continued.

Machining these components to work together with each other without binding is what makes SPHINX pistols special, Seargeant says.

THE FUTURE

The KRISS Group has very big plans for the SPHINX brand. Several models of the SDP that they are currently working on have yet to be released. But once they are, Seargeant says the company will shift their focus to other pistol designs and new calibers. FP

Breanna Armstrong is the associate editor for World of Firepower.

SPHINX Facts

- The SDP is available in compact, sub-compact and full-sized pistol models.
- SPHINX is named after the Swiss observatory atop Mount Junfraujoch in the Alps. It is a symbol of prestige and beauty as one of the highest observation decks in the world sitting over 11,300 feet above sea level.

WEBSITE: SphinxArms.com

SPECS

Sphinx

DISTRIBUTOR: KRISS USA
BRAND NAME: SPHINX
MODEL: SDP (Special Duty Pistol) Compact
BARREL LENGTH: 3.75"
TRIM: Alpha
CALIBER: 9mm Para
CAPACITY: 15+1
MSRP: $1,295.00
(Street Price: $995.00 and up)

KEY FEATURES:

- Competition-inspired trigger
- Constructed with steel slide, aluminum upper frame and polymer lower frame
- Internal slide guide rails that run the full length of the frame
- Low bore axis/high grip tang
- Three interchangeable grips
- Holster options include G-code, Safariland, Blade-Tech, Bravo Concealment, Raven Concealment
- Lifetime warranty to the original owner

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WALTHER
PPS

When focused on the enemy, Monty imagined that he and his targets were the only people in the world at that moment.

A DAY CLOSER

TO HOME

A BRITISH SNIPER TAKES US INSIDE THE INTENSE ACTION AT **PATROL BASE ARGYLL**

BY MONTY B / PHOTOS COURTESY OF SKYHORSE PUBLISHING

The following is an excerpt from "A Sniper's Conflict," a hardback from Skyhorse Publishing now available.

A FAIR FEW LONG DAYS AND NIGHTS HAD NOW GONE BY AND THE INSURGENTS HAD CONTINUED TO MOUNT THEIR ATTACKS, BOTH AGAINST OUR LOCATION AND THE FOOT AND MOBILE PATROLS THAT WENT OUT FROM OUR BASE DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS.

This usually occurred in the early afternoon but they also began attempting to conduct attacks during the hours of darkness, normally somewhere around 2300 hours. Those night engagements were usually short and sharp. After a number of nights this seemed to be the pattern being set by the insurgents for their H-hour, but the attacks were swiftly dealt with by the gun crews of the three tripod-mounted GPMGs in the sustained fire role. The Javelin crew would also launch a round or two into the darkness of the night, silencing the insurgent threats very swiftly and with pin-point accuracy.

The various types of nighttime viewing devices included a thermal imager up on the rooftop with the Javelin (known as the CLU, or Command Launch Unit), giving the Royal Marines command of the darkness during which the sentries provided cover while the remainder slept. The regular exchange of tracer incoming from the insurgents and outgoing from the rooftop was a sight to see; I loved watching it and always have. The red tracer would arch up slightly as it left the gun barrels and then come down, zipping through the darkness in what looked like a continuous red line heading toward the insurgents' firing positions. Some tracers would strike the ground or make contact early with something hard that would cause the round to ricochet straight back up and into the night sky, still glowing red, till it burned out of sight. A cracking sound—zip, zip with every round—would pierce the silence of the night.

The sound of any activity around us and in everything we did seemed even louder when fighting at night. The darkness appeared to amplify every noise, making it seem even more hostile, aggressive and threatening, from commands being shouted out and passed along the rooftop to the sounds of the impacts, detonations of the 40mm grenades as they landed on the ground with an awesome dull thud, an

echoing crump in the darkness off in the distance, to the sound of the Javelin missiles being launched and making a noise like one giant hand-held illumination rocket, a distinctive loud whooshing on firing as the rocket boosters kicked in. The latter always happened if we were both asleep. I would usually wake up first, fucking sharpish, and slightly startled for a few seconds; switching from comfortably asleep in my softie sleeping bag to full alert mode in an instant. I would try to get my hearing defense on as quickly as I could, cursing to myself for the first few moments, while at the same time trying to wake Ben who could sleep through almost anything.

This is a glimpse of daily life as a sniper.

Above, the tools of Monty's trade are on display.

READY TO ENGAGE

This hole was a couple of feet up from the base of the wall and with a slight change in position I had good eyes onto it. All of a sudden two insurgents were coming into my field of view as I focused on the gap, moving from the right. Instantly my heart started racing and pounding, my body's sweat tap turned on almost immediately. Where the fuck did these two come from? All that went through my mind in that split second was "Oh shit." Then more importantly, "What's the range?"

Check the range and confirm it, quickly. Can't fuck this one up, just because I was too idle to check my range card or use the laser range-finder. So with a quick glance down at the card I confirmed the figure in my head. It was more or less 770 metres to the wall and to what I was observing. They were close enough, and I had no time to fuck about; they could both move off and just disappear out of sight at any moment.

Both men were in the standing position; the lead insurgent of the pair who was standing on the left of the gap was just slightly taller than the one on the right. He had what looked like a light machine gun or belt-feed LMG (an AK family variant) and was trying to set this up on the wall, holding the weapon at the butt end. The other guy was trying to help him by setting up the bipod legs of the weapon. I raised my head slightly from the rear of the scope to check my elevation drum; this needed to be corrected and some increase in the range added to its current setting, which I always keep on 600 metres till an exact range to a target is given. I quickly made a slight adjustment so it was correct at 770 metres. Then a quick glance toward the right side of my optical scope at the deflection drum and I was happy with my wind correction. There was no time to waste.

Looking back through the scope and watching them both, I adjusted my focus control slightly for absolute clarity of the target sight picture, then using my right thumb I pushed the safety catch slowly from the rear fully forward, going from safe to fire. My heart pounded so strongly it felt like it might jump out of my mouth, and my mouth went really dry. As always at this point, I had to fully concentrate and focus: try to block out everything that was going on around me. Just me and these two insurgents: we are the only people in the world right now; there is nothing else.

I then placed the centre of my crosshairs onto the first insurgent's head as he was facing forward toward me. He was still in the standing position, still holding the rear of his weapon with both hands and trying to keep it upright while what appeared to be his No. 2 was trying to extend the legs of the bipod or release them. Once the LMG legs were sorted, the No. 2 moved slightly away out of my sight picture, giving me a clear shot onto the main threat at the time. I superimposed the centre of the crosshairs just under the target's nose, on the fleshy part between the top lip and the base of the nose. This view and the remainder of his head filled my sight picture as I turned up the magnification of my scope to x18 and made minor adjustments to the focus. Then, with slow, controlled breathing, I maintained that sight picture while simultaneously applying pressure to the trigger and gently pulling it to the rear with the tip of my index finger.

BANG! In a split second the projectile was released and on its way to the target end. The vibration of this action was immediately felt on the

ENGINEERED TO

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DISTINCT ADVANTAGE™

The power that is the British military. This is A Company 3 Platoon 2 PWRR commanded by Lt. D.

side of my face and reverberated through my right ear defender as I rested the right side of my face on the rifle's cheek piece. All the while I was still observing, waiting for impact at the target end. These few moments of waiting and observing always seem to me to last for interminable minutes rather than seconds.

Then, smack! Impact at the target end to the front of the head where the round made its entry point, impacting and penetrating the soft fleshy tissue, entering cleanly and forcing the head violently to the rear with invisible force. The rear of the head looked like it had just exploded off; a red mist effect now filled my sight picture. A bloody red mush, a mixture of bone fragments, tissue, dark hair and cloth splattered out to the rear of the now opened-up skull in a flash. What was left of the head came back forward and slumped down toward the chest, now out of sight to me as the body and its weapon immediately dropped to the floor behind the cover of the wall.

"THE DARKNESS APPEARED TO AMPLIFY EVERY NOISE, MAKING IT SEEM EVEN MORE HOSTILE, AGGRESSIVE AND THREATENING …"

Immediately I operated the bolt handle to eject the empty case as quickly as possible and chamber another round so I would be ready to fire again. I instinctively realigned onto my next target with a minor adjustment of my position, then placed the centre of the crosshairs onto the centre of observed mass of the second insurgent's body area. He was now facing me head on, still upright in the standing position with his weapon facing toward us: there was not a moment to lose. I just aimed and fired instinctively, waiting and watching as the seconds passed by, straining my right eye while observing and concentrating on the target. Sweat was pouring down my forehead, over my eyebrows and into my right eye, every drop of sweat giving a little stinging sensation.

The round impacted, making contact and entering the insurgent's lower jaw area just millimetres below the left side of his jaw. Instantly and violently this took a chunk of flesh and bone away from the side and back of his neck or base of the skull and went high left away from his body. A bright red mess of blood and tissue splattered outwards as if it had been torn off and his head snapped to the right as he fell to the ground. Again I quickly chambered another round and continued to observe the hole where the two insurgents had been for any signs of life. I thought: "Fuck, my round was off slightly and dropped a little."

BIRDS OF PREY

I watched and waited but nothing or no one appeared in that firing hole. I managed to wipe my face while still observing the area. Even the sleeves of my shirt were wet with sweat: I was soaking all over and just wanted to take off my helmet to get some air to my head and pour some water over it. However, the fighting was still going on all around me and suddenly my little part of the world opened back up to me. Back to reality. Ben was on it, verbally giving out another target indication to the GMG gunner; a target that would need the attention of the 40mm.

Noise, smell and physical discomfort all came flooding back to me. I had to get my arse off my right leg which was now going numb and the familiar pins and needles were tingling away in my foot, as always after a short time in this firing position. I leaned back, stretched out my leg slightly and tried rotating it, moving it quickly up and down to get some life back into my foot. At the same time I reached out to pick up my two ejected cases and put them in my trouser pocket, and then I was straight back up and onto my knees.

Retrieving my binoculars from their claymore bag, I started to scan the ground to the right of our location; an area which was heavily grassed in places and had a prominent compound. This seemed to be the new direction

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A spotting scope and binoculars are essential pieces of equipment carried and used by the sniper on all taskings.

As a pair, there is no attempt to conceal themselves on the rooftop while conducting observation of the local area.

"IT'S THE VERY SMALL THINGS, THE LITTLE TREATS IN LIFE, ESPECIALLY LIVING ON A PATROL BASE, THAT YOU LOOK FORWARD TO AT THE END OF A SHIT DAY."

of the insurgents' incoming firepower and they were on the move. Above us now were two Apache attack helicopters on station joining in the battle and hovering at a distance, observing and maneuvering around in the sky like birds of prey. They would locate a threat and then destroy it with bursts from their main weapon systems ripping into one of the compounds used by the insurgents.

ONE DAY CLOSER

We were just on the three-hour mark with this contact. My mind was clear at times but the image of the round impacting into one of the insurgent heads kept momentarily popping into my brain. I broke from my position, chambered another round, applied my safety catch and picked up the ejected case. My bipod went back onto my rifle and my sight covers back onto the ends of my optical scope: they were snapped off some time ago but had still done the job of protecting the optics.

At last the time came when we could both remove our helmets and undo our body armor. What a relief it was to once again be able to feel that cold air, a refreshing breeze on your head and body, to be able to scratch that itch, to rub your head from where your helmet has been resting securely on it and untangle your sweaty hair, to remove the sweat-soaked shirt with its white salt marks around the armpits back and front that stinks to high heaven, and to put on a dry, clean sweatshirt. Now that's an awesome feeling after a crazy day. It's the very small things, the little treats in life, especially when living on a patrol base, that you look forward to at the end of a shit day as a little morale-booster. For the two of us, it was usually food.

So far this had been our longest and largest contact with the insurgents, who are usually a lot harder to locate and observe. They use similar military skills and drills to ours: for example, cover from view and fire, clear arcs of fire, covered approach and exit routes, maybe even some form of rehearsals before an attack. The list goes on.

The sun started to go down on yet another long day, disappearing behind the cloud cover to be replaced by a very bright full moon, and the air temperature dropped enough to cause a slight chill as the evening began to set in. The day ended just as it had started with some rifle-cleaning, sorting out of personal equipment and the cleaning-up of our firing positions ready for the next engagement with the insurgents. This was followed by a cracking big mug of tea and some hot scoff: boil-in-the-bag sausage and baked beans with Tabasco sauce stirred in; the food of spartans. And another day closer to coming home. **FP**

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JAMES & MARYLN BROWN.

SHUT UP AND READ

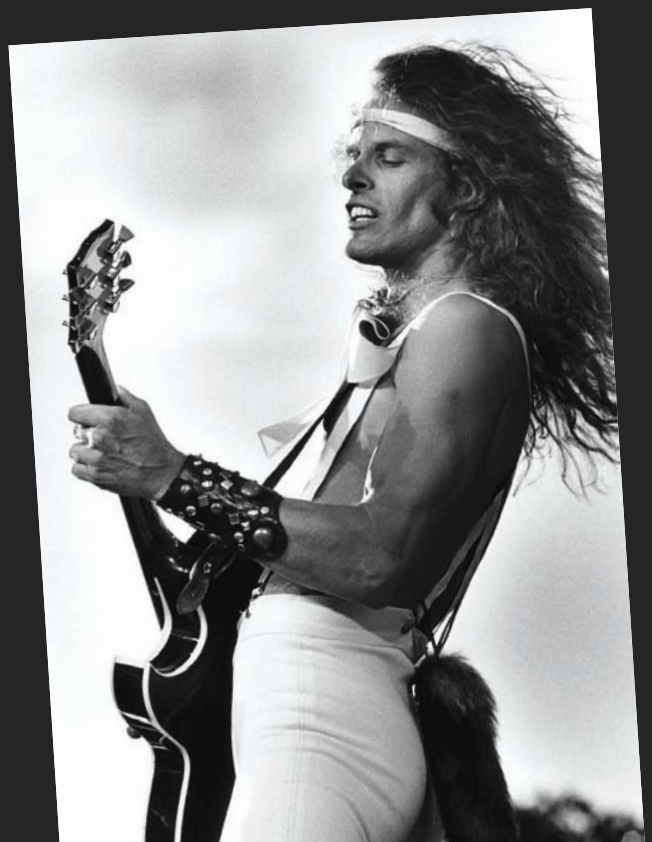
ROCKER AND GUN COLLECTOR TED NUGENT EXPLAINS HOW HUNTING AND THE OUTDOOR LIFESTYLE INSPIRE HIM

BY JOSHUA SWANAGON / PHOTOS COURTESY OF TED NUGENT AND WWW.TEDNUGENT.COM

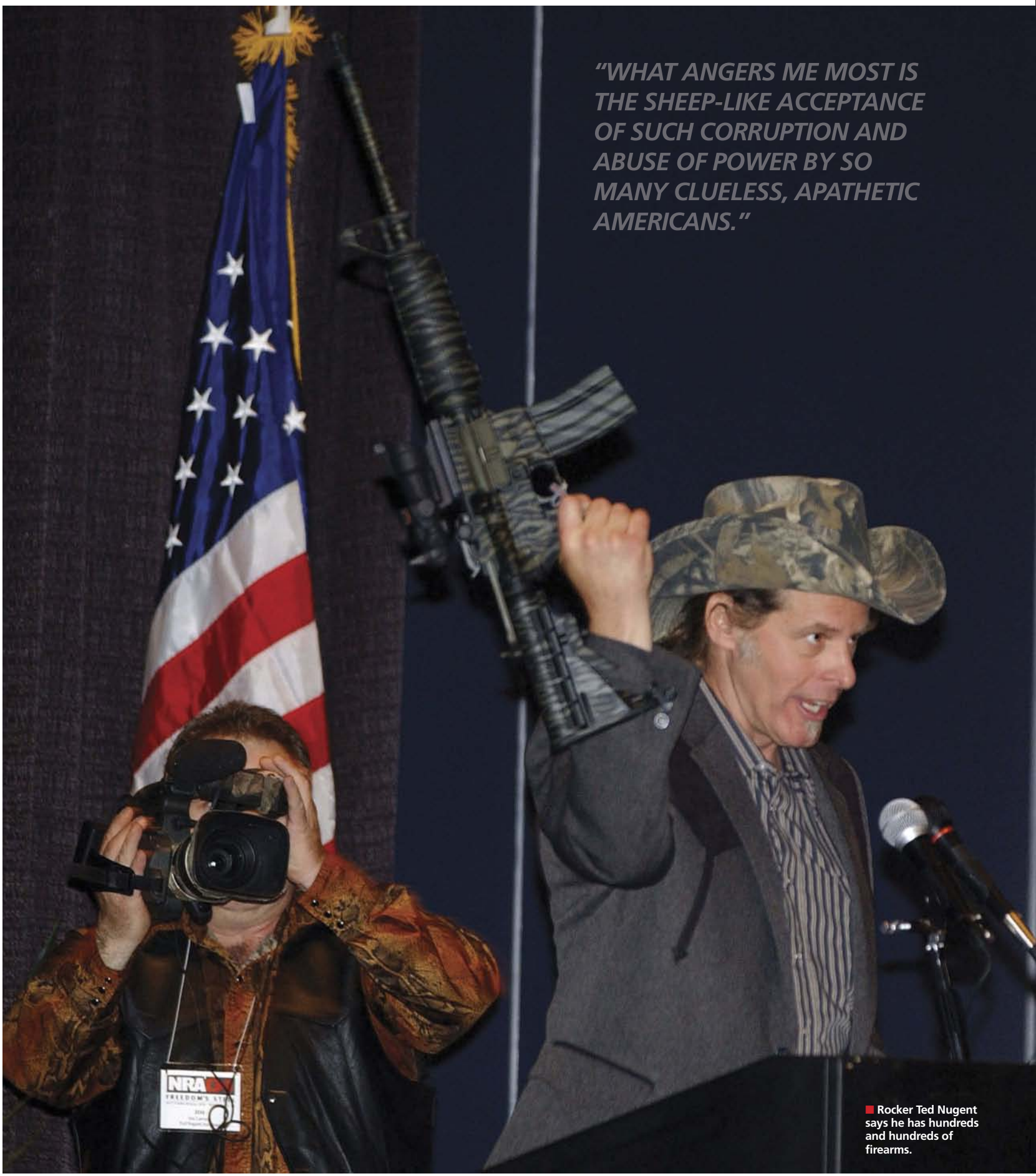
YOU MAY HAVE NEVER HEARD A BLOOD SCREAMING ROCK SONG IN YOUR LIFE, BUT CHANCES ARE YOU STILL KNOW WHO TED NUGENT IS. HARD ROCKER, PATRIOT, HUNTER AND PHILANTHROPIST, NUGENT SPANS A WIDE GAMUT OF INTERESTS AND IS PROLIFIC IN ALL OF THEM, SO IT'S NEVER A DULL MOMENT IN HIS WORLD.

RECENTLY, WE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE A TALK WITH THE "MOTOR CITY MADMAN," AND HE SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK ROCK, HUNTING, FIREARMS, THE NRA AND HIS PROGRAM FOR KIDS.

LET'S ROCK.



1978: Rock guitarist Ted Nugent performs before 300,000 fans at the 1979 California Jam II in Ontario, California. Nugent was one of the headliners along with Santana and Aerosmith. (Photo by George Rose/Getty Images)



"WHAT ANGERS ME MOST IS THE SHEEP-LIKE ACCEPTANCE OF SUCH CORRUPTION AND ABUSE OF POWER BY SO MANY CLUELESS, APATHETIC AMERICANS."

Rocker Ted Nugent says he has hundreds and hundreds of firearms.

PART I: SHUT UP AND JAM

WOF: What inspired you to get back into the studio for SHUTUP&JAM!?

Ted Nugent: American soul music courses through my veins on a daily basis, and the sonic adventure never really ends. I jam on my guitars daily, and with nonstop fall/winter soul-cleansing hunting time, the inspiration is immeasurable.

Surrounded by the world's greatest musicians drives me to capture the new musical ideas as soon as I can get everyone into the studio. We did it in spring 2013 and created one of my best records ever. We are all very proud of SHUTUP&JAM!

WOF: On the song "She's Gone," you have the Red Rocker, Sammy Hagar, sitting in with you. Was this something you guys have been trying to do for a while?

TN: Sammy and I come from the same all-American R&B rock-n-roll soul music of our black heroes and have been friends forever. It was simply planetary alignment luck that we could finally collaborate on a throttling track like this.

WOF: With over 6,500 live shows under your belt, are you starting to look toward winding down, or are you still charging on?

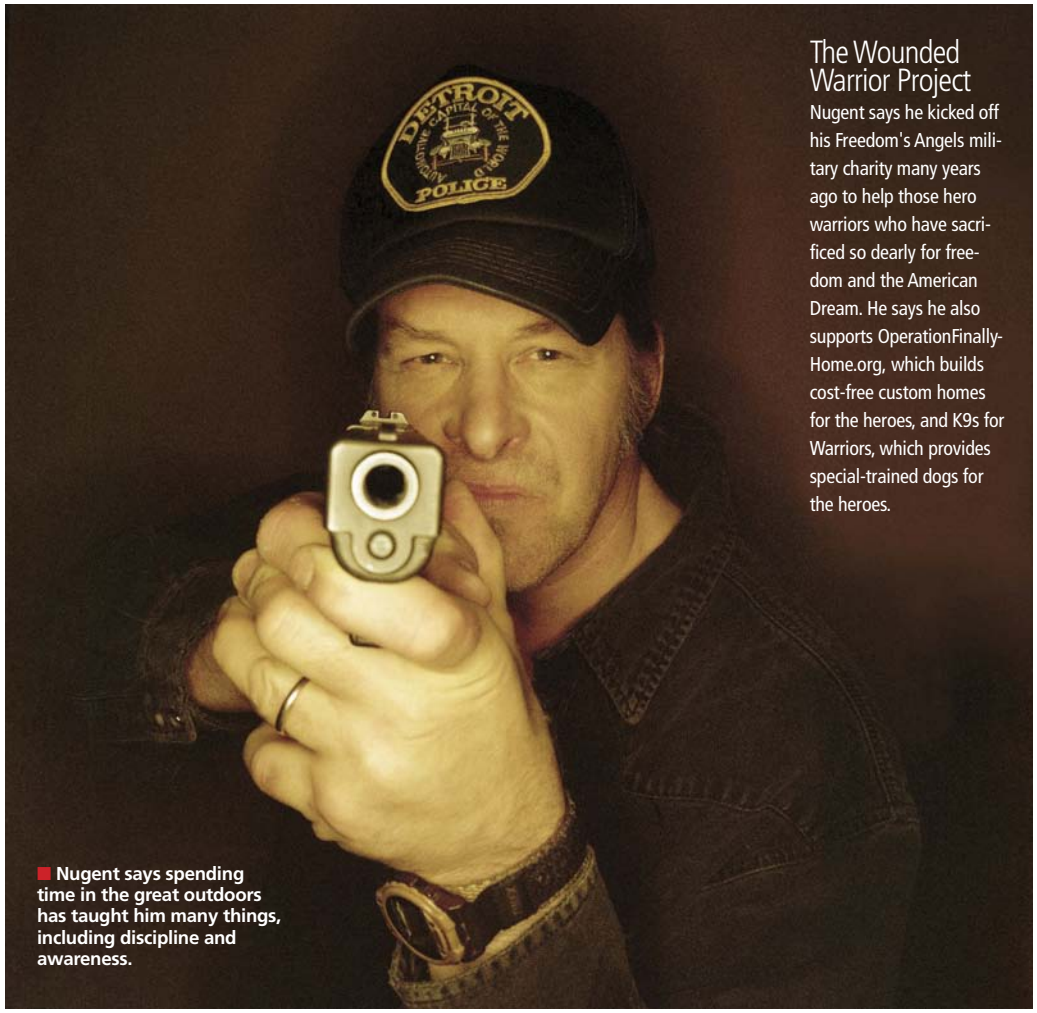
TN: In between hunting seasons, I do indeed charge on! I'm taking 2015 off from touring to spend more time with my growing army of kids and grandkids, but I will jam with the Charlie Daniels Band as we once again re-create the Charlie Daniels Volunteer Jam charity fundraiser in Nashville in May.

WOF: In a genre synonymous with sex, drinking and drugs, you have used it as an avenue to promote your other passions: firearms and hunting. How satisfying is it to be able to use your music to bring people to the shooting sports?

TN: Quality of life comes from intelligent quality of choices. The great-outdoors lifestyle has taught me so much about discipline, awareness, accountability, self, team playing, independence, individuality and a definitive down-to-earth connection with my life support system. […] I have always been driven to wake others up to the self-inflicted scourge of substance abuse and the soul-cleansing, healing powers of nature. It feels better than I can possibly describe.

WOF: Which collection is larger: Your collection of guitars or firearms?

TN: Firearms, by far. I have dozens and dozens of amazing collectable guitars but 100s and 100s of various and amazing firearms.



The Wounded Warrior Project

Nugent says he kicked off his Freedom's Angels military charity many years ago to help those hero warriors who have sacrificed so dearly for freedom and the American Dream. He says he also supports OperationFinallyHome.org, which builds cost-free custom homes for the heroes, and K9s for Warriors, which provides special-trained dogs for the heroes.

Nugent says spending time in the great outdoors has taught him many things, including discipline and awareness.

PART II: ON THE HUNT

WOF: Hunting season just ended in Michigan. How did your hunt go this year?

TN: Dare I say, even as I type these answers that the Nuge family hunt season of 2014/2015 continues to be the best hunt season of our lives. And that is really saying something! A visit to my Facebook page will show you the intense celebration of some truly amazing kills. Lucky, lucky me!

WOF: What are you shooting when you go out hunting?

TN: My hunting is 99 percent bowhunting, so these days I'm shooting my Mathews NoCam, Creed and ChillX bows, my Nugent GoldTip Zebra arrows with Lumenoks and Muzzy broadheads.

WOF: Do you hunt while on tour?

TN: I do. I have so many great hunting buddies all around the world that when possible we always get after something.

PART III: THE NRA

WOF: What are some of the states that surprised you the most for being less gun friendly than you would have thought?

TN: Because I have diligently monitored the gun issue all my life and have witnessed the blatant infringement by so many for so long, nothing surprises me at all. What angers me most is the sheep-like acceptance of such corruption and abuse of power by so many clueless apathetic Americans. That is the No. 1 scourge of our country.

For 25 years, Ted Nugent's hunting show "Spirit of the Wild" has been on the air.

Kamp for Kids

Nugent says he started the Ted Nugent Kamp for Kids shortly after the death of his friend and hero Fred Bear. "At his direction I took my little celebrity resource to attract families to learn about being the best you can be, remaining clean and sober, and to be accountable in our consumerism while learning the joys of hunting, fishing and trapping," he says. "The army of amazing volunteers deserves all the credit at our annual Kamps in South Dakota, Nebraska, Colorado and Iowa. They are doing God's work and saving lives."

WOF: How did you come to be a board member of the NRA?

TN: Members of the board nominated me many years ago, and I have proudly yet humbly been voted in every term since for more than 20 years.

WOF: Are there any Ted Nugent signature NRA products in the pipeline?

TN: Not NRA specifically, but I do have my own signature GoldTip arrow line and Ted Nugent ammo in hunting and self-defense loads.

PART IV: SPIRIT OF THE WILD

WOF: Your show "Spirit of the Wild," which is on the Outdoor Channel, has been running for quite a while. What are some of the best moments from the show?

TN: Actually, we have had a "Ted Nugent Spirit of the Wild" TV show now for more than 25 years. We started out on public television and have been the No. 1 show on Outdoor Channel for more than 20 years. We don't produce our show per se; instead, we simply push record and document the honesty of how 99 percent of American hunters celebrate this perfect tooth, fang and claw ballet in nature.

All the shows are nonstop greatest moments, but the most gratifying elements are all those non-hunters and even anti-hunters who have awakened to the imperative of our conservation and resource stewardship responsibilities to the good earth due to the zero BS factor on our show. Truth is a beautiful thing.

WOF: I've noticed that you do a lot of bow hunting on "Spirit of the Wild." Is bow hunting your favorite method?

TN: By far. Love the crosshairs on a great sniper rifle and thrill at all handgun hunting, but close-range bow hunting is the most intense of all.

WOF: Twenty five years is a good run for any TV show, and you are still going strong. What do you attribute the success of "Spirit of the Wild" to?

TN: Millions of people on Facebook have made it abundantly clear that they love our show because we don't BS around. We celebrate the kill, not the politically correct harvest nonsense. We don't wipe off blood, and we don't play games hiding bait or feed. We ambush and kill our food, and show ultimate reverence for the beasts by passionately articulating how sacred each hard-earned shank of protein from every kill is, and how every hunt and kill is pure sport, pure flesh and supreme trophy, regardless of size or species. We document the raw, down-to-earth, honest, no-BS truth about nature and our perfect role in God's creation. **FP**

Joshua Swanagon—who grew up in Denver and has studied survival in both urban and wilderness environments for most of his life—is an avid knife and firearm enthusiast.

"I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN DRIVEN TO WAKE OTHERS UP TO THE SELF-INFLICTED SCOURGE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND THE SOUL-CLEANSING, HEALING POWERS OF NATURE."

How To Reach Him
WEB www.TedNugent.com
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Ted and his wife Shemane Nugent shoot guns on their 1,200 acre ranch in Concord, Michigan, on June 6, 2013. Ted, 64, said when he was younger he spent his money buying hunting property instead of drugs, like many of the musicians in his time did. Their main ranch is in Texas, but they spend time in Michigan throughout the year. The Michigan property has a log cabin/hunting lodge, a shop where they keeps their guns, guitars and a few vehicles, a lake with a boat, and numerous gun/bow and arrow ranges. (Photo by Andrew Spear for The Washington Post via Getty Images)

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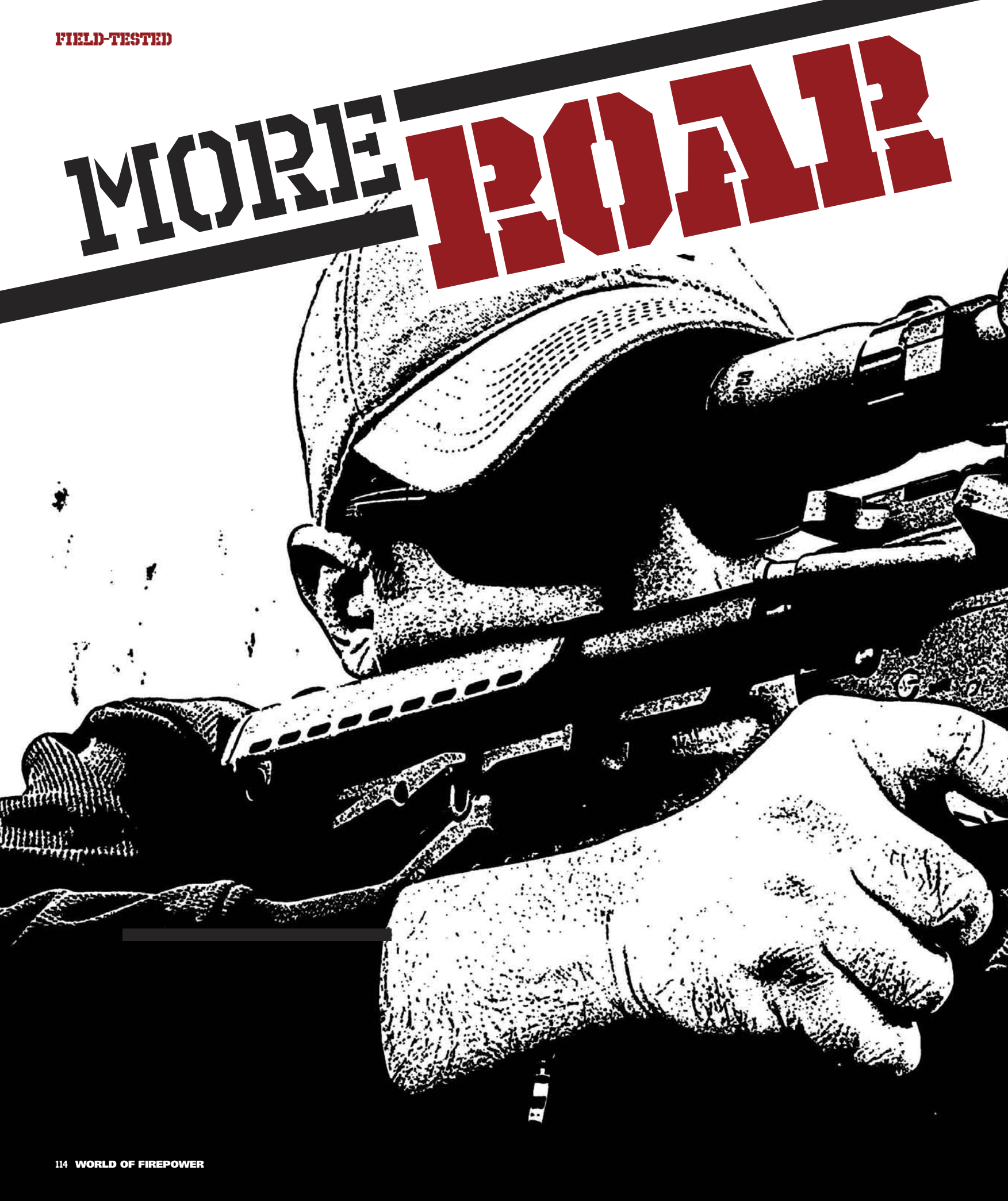


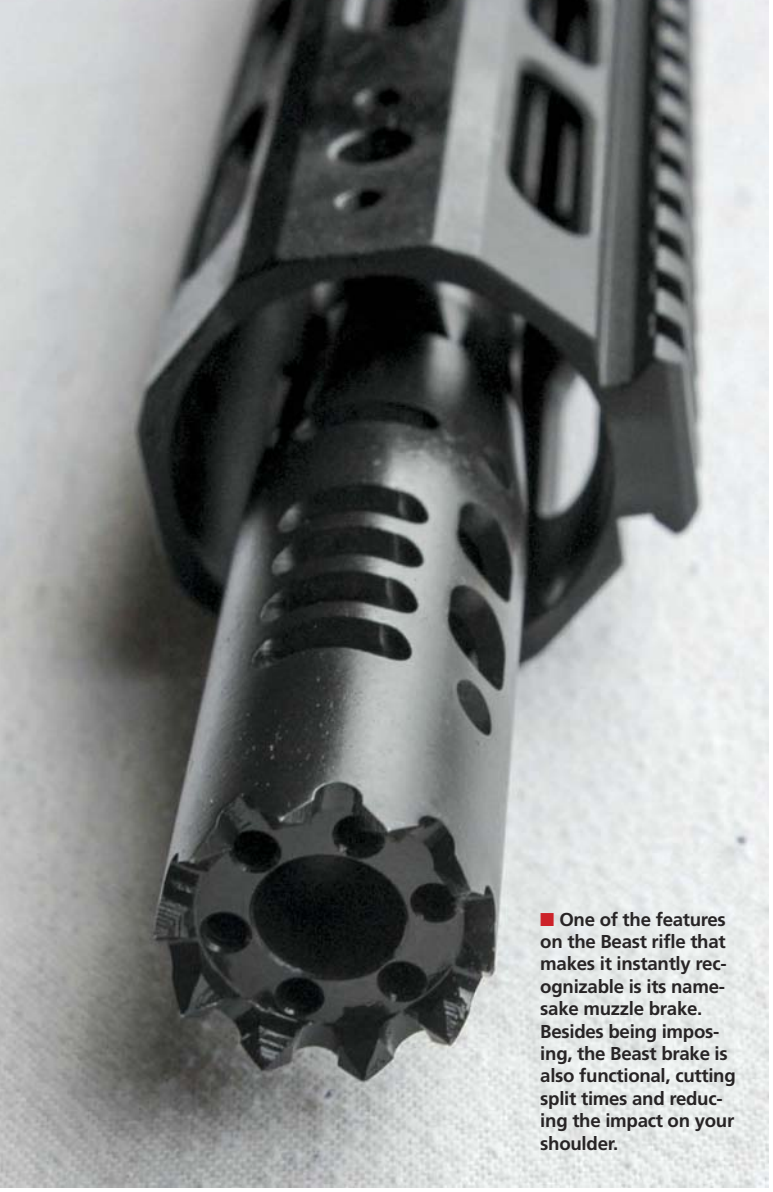
THE ROCK RIVER ARMS' LAR-458 BEAST IS ONE MEAN MACHINE

▶WORDS AND PHOTOS BY BRAD FITZPATRICK

ARS ARE MORE POPULAR THAN EVER, AND COMPANIES THAT HAD NO INTEREST IN BLACK GUNS PRIOR TO THE SUDDEN AND PRECIPITOUS RISE IN AR SALES ARE SUDDENLY OFFERING THEIR OWN VERSION OF THE MODERN SPORTING RIFLE TO THE SHOOTING MARKET.

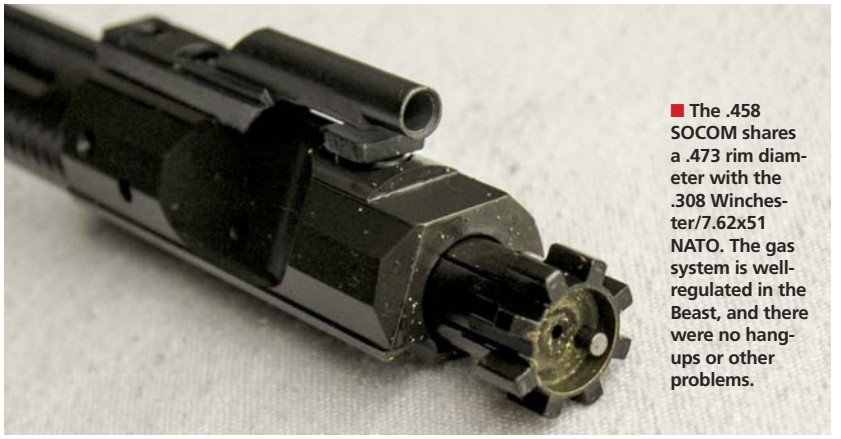
The recent black gun boom has generated a lot of interest in the AR platform as a hunting, competition and defensive weapon. With a little cash and minimal mechanical skill you can outfit your rifle in exactly the manner you'd like.

The .458 SOCOM was designed to be compatible with standard AR lowers, and a 20-round 5.56 AR magazine will hold 7 rounds of .458 SOCOM. Thirty-round mags will hold 9 .458s. It is an excellent alternative to the standard 5.56 AR for close-quarters battle and hunting.



■ One of the features on the Beast rifle that makes it instantly recognizable is its namesake muzzle brake. Besides being imposing, the Beast brake is also functional, cutting split times and reducing the impact on your shoulder.

■ The .458 SOCOM offers up some impressive ballistics; in the test rifle it drove a 300-grain TTSX bullet at around 1,700 feet per second from the Beast's 14.5-inch barrel. It's an excellent tactical and hunting rifle if you can stand the recoil, which is not abusive but is noticeably stronger than what you can expect from a 5.56 rifle.



■ The .458 SOCOM shares a .473 rim diameter with the .308 Winchester/7.62x51 NATO. The gas system is well-regulated in the Beast, and there were no hang-ups or other problems.

After a while, though, even the most ardent AR fan can start to feel like they're suffering from a serious case of déjà vu. Sure, there are several nice new rifles on the market, and sure, there are lots of great options out there to trick out your rifle and turn it into a one-of-a-kind weapon, but there are only so many gizmos and gadgets you can put on those accessory rails.

As a gun writer, I spent time shooting a whole host of new ARs, and while they were all fun to shoot, it's hard to come up with new adjectives to describe the same rifle platform with minor tweaks here and there. And then came the Beast.

DIFFERENT KIND OF ANIMAL

Rock River Arms' LAR-458 Beast is a different kind of animal entirely. Sure, at its heart it's still a gas-operated AR rifle, and you'll immediately recognize the controls and the fit and feel of the gun. But while AR-15 rifles operate within the bounds of the 5.56/.223 and AR-10s rely in the staid 7.62x51/.308, the Beast changes the rules a bit. There are ARs chambered in .243, .300 Blackout, .338 Federal and other cartridges, but the Beast makes you rethink what an AR can do.

RISE OF THE .458 SOCOM

The .458 SOCOM (Special Operations Command) was developed as a more powerful alternative to the M4/M16 rifles used in the military. While the .458 SOCOM does have impressive ballistics, it was designed to be used with minimal modification to existing platforms.

The .458 SOCOM shares a .473 rim diameter with other popular cartridges, including the .308 Winchester, and the case design allows SOCOM cartridges to be fed into standard AR mags with no modification. A standard 20-round AR magazine will hold seven .458 SOCOM cartridges (the larger .458 rounds single stack in the magazine instead of double-stacking). In a 30-round AR magazine, you can fit nine of the behemoth SOCOMs.

The .458 SOCOM can be loaded with bullets from 100 to 600 grains, with the most common hunting bullets ranging from 300 to 400 grains while the larger, heavier, subsonic 500- and 600-grain loads are designed for tactical applications. Driven from a 16-inch barrel at 1,900 feet per second, a 300-grain load generates about 2,400 foot-pounds of energy and leaves an impressive .45-caliber hole in your target, which puts it on par with the aged but still useful .45-70.

Because the .458 SOCOM uses existing AR magazines, all you need to modify your existing AR to .458 SOCOM is a new upper. In terms of practi-

■ The .458 SOCOM is designed to fit on a standard AR lower, so you can purchase a .458 SOCOM upper from Rock River Arms or a complete rifle. The Colona, Illinois-based rifle maker has a history of producing high-quality ARs, and the Beast is no exception.

■ The Rock River Arms Delta CAR stock is collapsible and offers a battery storage compartment and plenty of different sling options. There's a point for attaching a RRA quick detach sling as well as a 1915 Picatinny rail.

Rock River ArmsX-Series Lineup

Rock River Arms has introduced their X-Series line of AR rifles, which are available in 5.56, 6.8 SPC, .308 and .458 SOCOM. These rifles come with RRA Operator stocks (CAR or A2), 18-inch RRA TRO-XL free-floated handguards, 18-inch fluted, bead-blasted stainless steel cryo-treated barrels and RRA two-stage triggers.

These rifles have flattop receivers for mounting optics and are available with either black or tan stocks/grips/handguards. These rifles are well-built and durable, and you can expect RRA's high level of accuracy.

Weights range from 7.7 to 8.7 pounds (depending upon caliber) and MSRPs range from $1,450 to $1,550. No matter what you're looking for in an AR there's a product in the Rock River Arms X-Series line that will meet your needs, from hunting to self-defense to law enforcement and competition.

cal use, the .458 SOCOM is a very good moderate-range hunting rifle for deer-sized game, and it's an outstanding choice for hog hunting. The 5.56 is commonly employed on hogs, but that's asking a lot of a bullet that weighs 70 grains or less, especially when you encounter one of those rare 300 pound-plus boars with armored shoulder plates.

UNLEASHING THE BEAST

The LAR-458 Beast is an imposing rifle, with its short, heavy barrel and aggressive muzzle brake. Most of the furniture on the rifle bears the RRA logo, from the adjustable Delta CAR stock with a 1913 Picatinny rail on the lower tube for mounting a sling or other accessories, to a quick-detach sling swivel attachment point and a push-button release battery compartment with O-ring seal.

"AS A CLOSE-QUARTERS COMBAT RIFLE, THE .458 BEAST IS ALMOST WITHOUT EQUAL, PRODUCING ENERGY LEVELS THAT MAKE THE .45 ACP LOOK DOWNRIGHT ANEMIC."

The Beast has a forged A4 flattop receiver that makes it easy to mount optics, and it comes with a soft, comfortable, Hogue rubber pistol grip that is wide enough to secure the rifle in your hand, helping you maintain muzzle position and get back on target more quickly for shorter split times.

There's an RRA TRO-STD Rifle Length Free Float Rail Handguard in place, which has plenty of additional rail space for mounting lights and optics as needed and a wide tube diameter for a comfortable, secure grip.

The handguard is lightweight, reducing the overall bulk of the Beast, and there is a low-profile gas block system. The 14½-inch chrome moly bull barrel has a 1/14 twist rate and comes with a functional and mean-looking Beast muzzle brake pinned and welded to the muzzle. Overall weight is 7.6 pounds, and the

For More Info

COMPANY
Rock River Arms Inc.

WEB
RockRiverArms.com

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(866) 980-ROCK

COMPANY
Southern Ballistic Research, LLC

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RRA's two-stage trigger comes standard with the Beast, and it helps improve accuracy. With guns that generate SOCOM levels of recoil, flinching can be exacerbated when the rifle has a gritty, heavy trigger. The RRA trigger breaks cleanly and helps minimize flinch-related misses.

The Beast's recoil requires a grip that is comfortable and keeps your shooting hand secured, and the Hogue grips (shown here) work extremely well. They're wide enough to accommodate a large hand and comfortable enough to help stabilize the rifle under recoil.

overall length is 37 inches. It's an imposing rifle, but it's well-built and designed to perform.

Rock River Arms knows ARs, so when they decided to build a .458 SOCOM, it wasn't a far-fetched proposition for the Colona, Illinois-based company. After all, the .458 SOCOM was designed to be compatible with AR-platform lowers and magazines, so there were only a few minor mods needed. However, the .458 SOCOM requires a gas system that is properly regulated to run reliably, and because the .458 SOCOM is a new cartridge (relatively speaking), I was curious to see how reliable the Beast is.

New cartridges sometimes require a bit of tuning and tweaking, but such was not the case with the Beast. From the first bellow until the action locked open for the final time there wasn't a single misfeed, jam or malfunction, just a lot of big, empty brass cases scattered on the range. Other cartridges that have been transitioned to AR rifles in the past have been major failures because the cartridge design was not conducive to the platform, but the big .458 SOCOM, with its gently-sloping shoulder design, feeds perfectly, and the Beast's gas system was perfect in my test. Early development of the .458 SOCOM determined that it worked best with barrels around 16 inches, so the Beast's 14.5-inch pipe is right in line.

Accuracy was excellent, and with the ammunition tested (SBR ammo loaded with 300 grain TTSX bullets) the Beast was capable of beating the company's 1.5 MOA promise. Average group size from a fixed rest at 100 yards averaged 1.37 inches with the ammo tested, and while none of the groups broke an inch, the best three-shot cluster measured just over that. Some big-bore rifles, both semi-autos and bolt guns, forsake accuracy for energy, but that's not the case here.

The Beast would be an excellent hunting rifle for medium-sized game out to moderate ranges, and it has the power needed to put down a big hog in its tracks. If you've spent much time tracking down sounders of pigs with an AR, you know that stopping a hog with a 5.56 cartridge requires precise shot placement, and even then the result is sometimes a lost animal unless you're using very tough bullets. With the .458 SOCOM Beast you've got a rifle that has the accuracy to put the bullet in the right place, and that bullet is big enough to shed some serious energy.

As a close-quarters combat rifle, the .458 Beast is almost without equal, producing energy levels that make the .45 ACP look downright anemic. For those who were seeking a more powerful alternative to the 5.56 for specialized military applications, the .458 is the answer.

Everyone who knew that I was testing the Beast (a few friends and all the neighbors, for the Beast has quite a roar) asked the very same question when the range evaluation was complete—how was the recoil? I suspect most believed I would be looking pretty rough after the experience, but if they wanted to hear horror stories of crushed clavicles, dizzying kick and rearing muzzles I let them down, because this Beast is pretty tame. Does the Beast have stiffer recoil than a comparable 5.56? You better be-

This is the .458 SOCOM beside a .223 cartridge. The length allows the .458 ammo to be loaded in standard AR mags, but the SOCOM single stacks and overall capacity is reduced. Still, seven rounds of .458 SOCOM ammo (from a standard 20 round AR mag) offers a lot of knockdown power.

lieve it, but it's not abusive or painful. Having an adjustable stock with enough length helps. A fixed stock that's too short or, just as bad, a stock that doesn't have enough length adjustment to accommodate a long-armed shooter, would make the experience far less pleasant. With the Beast's RRA six-position stock, its hefty barrel and almost 9-pound bulk (with a scope and a full magazine) recoil isn't painful.

When I shot the rifle from a standing position, the crosshairs rose up and away from the target with each shot, but I could keep the target in the reticle and get back on center quickly. Split times weren't as fast as a 5.56 rifle, no, but you can bet they're faster than you can achieve with a lightweight 20-gauge semi-auto or pump self-defense gun with slugs, and the Beast offers far more range than a scattergun.

The two-stage trigger is excellent, and after minimal take-up it breaks just over 5 pounds on my scale. It certainly helps achieve better groups than you could muster with a lesser trigger, and in a rifle like this that produces substantial recoil a heavy, gritty trigger would exacerbate flinch as the shooter anticipates kick.

The flattop receiver is the perfect platform for mounting all sorts of optics. I used a Hawke Endurance 1.25-4.5x scope with illuminated center dot, a great choice for all-purpose work with the Beast. If this rifle belonged to me, I think I'd also have an additional sight, something along the lines of a Trijicon's SRS to maximize the versatility of the Beast.

CAPTURE THE BEAST

If you're suffering from a bit of AR burnout, the Beast may be the answer to your problems. It doesn't just offer something different, it offers a viable alternative to the standard 5.56 rifle.

For those who are serious about hunting with an AR, especially big game, the Beast is a great option. It makes a very impressive self-defense rifle, and its prodigious power and the large frontal area of the .458 bullet means that you'll have plenty of power on tap when you need it most.

The team at Rock River Arms did a great job taming the Beast, designing a gun that is extremely reliable, accurate and manageable to shoot. If you've got room in your gun case for one more AR and want something completely different, the Rock River Arms LAR-458 Beast might be just what you've been looking for. **FP**

Brad Fitzpatrick is the author of two books, attended Northern Kentucky University where he earned a degree in biology and was a member of the school's trap and skeet team. He is currently a full-time writer and lives near Cincinnati.

SBR .458 SOCOM Ammunition

If you're looking for .458 SOCOM ammunition, then SBR (Southern Ballistic Research, LLC) is a great place to start.

They're the leading manufacturer of .458 SOCOM ammunition and they offer more loads than anyone, from their flat-shooting 250 grain Barnes TSX load to their subsonic 500 grain ammo. No matter what you do with your .458 SOCOM, there's a SBR load that will work for you. The load I tested in the Beast was the 300 grain Barnes TTSX that managed an average of 1,695 feet per second from the rifle's 14.5 inch bull barrel.

In addition to the 12 loads they currently offer, SBR is adding 7 additional loads in the near future. These include a 100-grain CQB load, 500 grain loads with FMJ and tungsten powder core frangible bullets and a line of 350-grain tracer loads. Velocities range from 980 feet per second for the 500-grain subsonic loads to 3,000 fps for the 100 grain CQB. With this kind of load versatility and a wide variety of bullet options for virtually every scenario, SBR has become the headquarters for .458 SOCOM ammunition and they have helped make versatile rifles like the Beast even more capable.

The RRA standard of accuracy for the Beast in .458 SOCOM is 1.5 inches at 100 yards, but as you can see here the rifle is capable of groups closer to an inch with SBR ammo. If you're a hog hunter, then this rifle/ammo combination would be deadly on pigs.

SPECS

Rock River Arms LAR-458 BEAST Action: Gas-operated

ACTION: Gas-operated
CALIBER: .458 SOCOM
CAPACITY: 7/9 with standard 20/30 round 5.56 AR magazines
RECEIVER: A4 Flattop
HANDGUARD: RRA TRO-STD standard length free-floated
BARREL: 14.5 Chrome moly bull profile
MUZZLE BRAKE: RRA Beast brake
WEIGHT: 7.6 pounds
LENGTH: 37 Inches
MSRP $1,500

THE MODEL
Stephanie LeBeau

STYLIST
Teri Reid

THE GUN
AR: HK-USC 45

PHOTOGRAPHY
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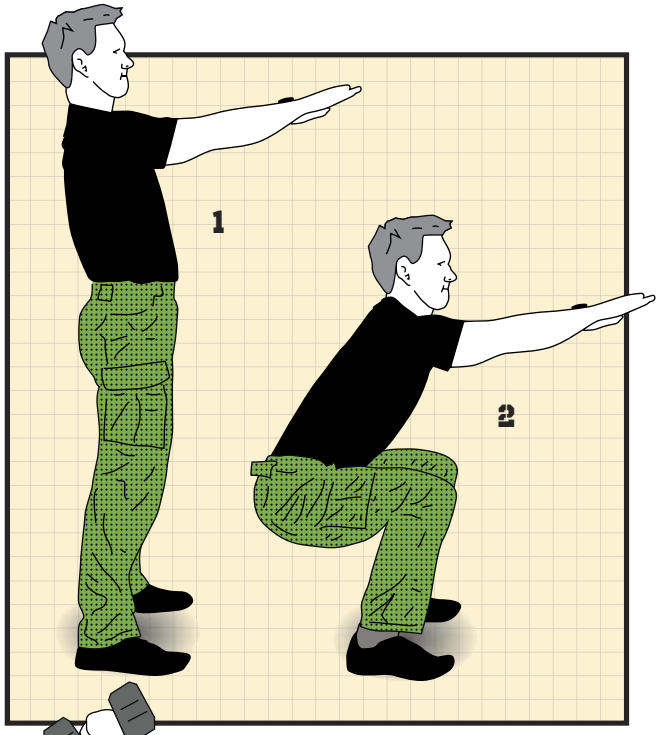
SOLID FOUNDATION

BUILD POWERFUL LEGS & IMPROVE YOUR SHOOTING ACCURACY

BY STEW SMITH / ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIC KNAGG

THERE ARE MULTIPLE FACTORS INVOLVED IN SHOOTING WELL—INCLUDING GRIP, AIM, BREATHING AND TRIGGER CONTROL, AND A GOOD, STRONG STANCE—BUT YOU CAN ENHANCE YOUR GAME WITH SOME CROSS-TRAINING.

The following exercises, which have minimal cost, will strengthen your stance so you can shoot all day with better precision. Just set aside 20 minutes per day a couple days per week, and watch your shooting skills and leg strength improve.

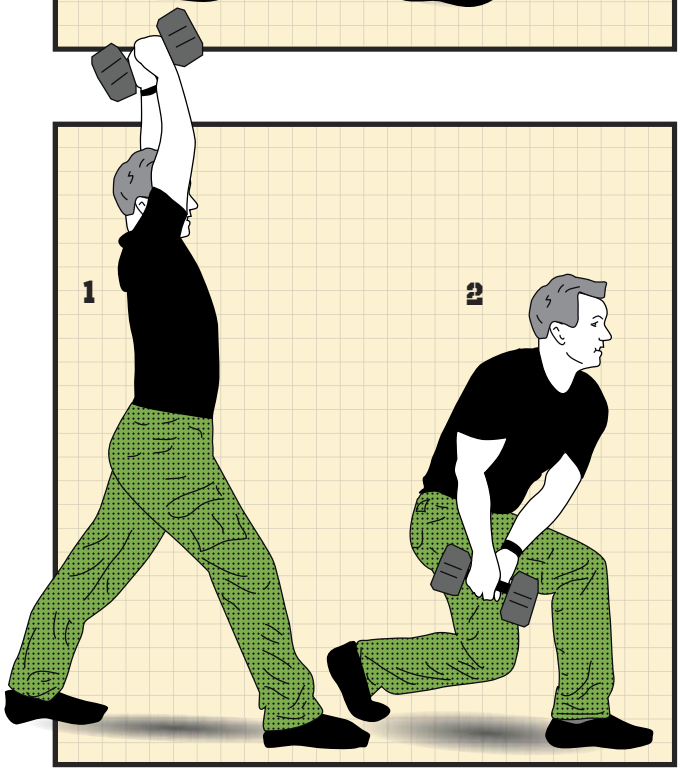


EXERCISE 1 SQUATS

HOW TO DO IT Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart with your arms straight in front of you. Drop your butt back as though sitting in a chair, pause, return to the starting position and repeat.

KEYS In the upward motion, concentrate on squeezing your glutes. While performing the motion, keep your heels on the ground and your knees over your ankles. Your shins should be near vertical at all times. You can do this with or without a dumbbell/kettlebell in your hands.

SETS & REPS Do four sets of 10 with a minute rest between sets. To mix it up, do descending sets. For example, do one set of as many reps as you can. Rest five seconds and do another set of as many reps as you can. Repeat until you've done five sets.



EXERCISE 2 WOODCHOPPER LUNGES WITH DUMBBELLS

HOW TO DO IT Bend your knees, pick up a dumbbell with your right hand and stand. Bend your knees slightly and raise the weight above your head. With your legs shoulder-width apart, slide your left leg back. Bend your right leg until it's parallel to the ground, swing the weight to the outside of your right thigh, pause, return to the starting position and repeat on the other side.

KEYS Swing the weight to the outside of your leg while you're in the down position.

SETS & REPS Do four sets of 10 with a minute rest between sets. To mix it up, try descending sets. For example, do one set of as many reps as you can. Rest five seconds and do another set of as many reps as you can. Repeat until you've done five sets.

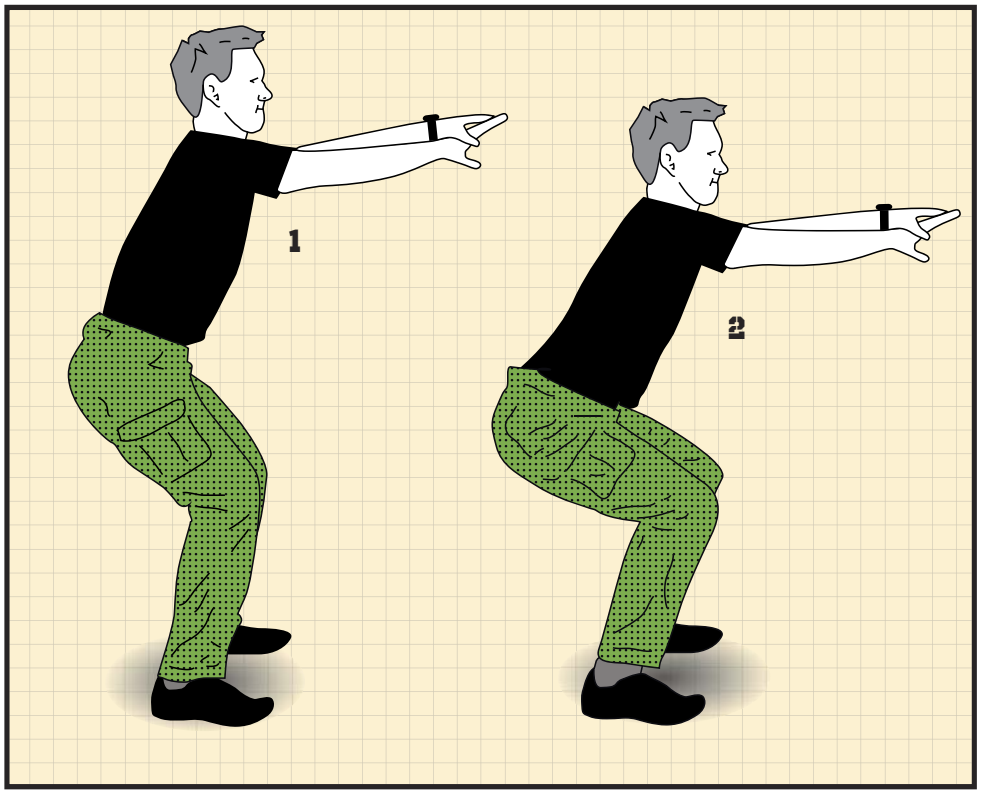
EXERCISE 3
½ SQUAT

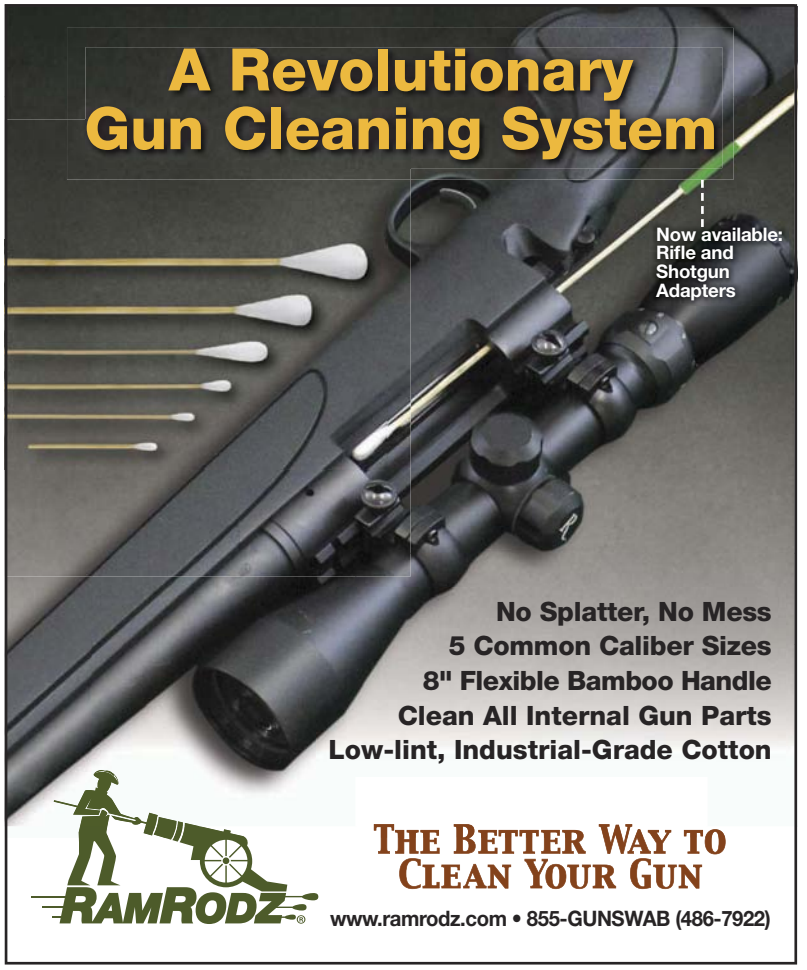
HOW TO DO IT Intensify your squat by doing half squats. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart with your arms straight in front of you. While in the full squat position, hold the pose and push yourself up and down within a 6-inch range of motion.

KEYS Do not straighten your legs until you're done.

SETS & REPS Do four sets of 10 with a minute rest between sets. To mix it up, do three sets of 20 to 30 reps. **FP**

A former Navy SEAL lieutenant, Stew Smith is certified as a certified strength and conditioning specialist by the National Strength and Conditioning Association.





TO PROTECT & SERVE

THE DRIVING EMOTIONS OF AN UH-1Y HELICOPTER PILOT

WORDS BY DOUG JEFFREY
PHOTOS BY GUS ALONZO

Two members of the crew — Staff Sgt. Addison Hall (left) and Eric Hamer — get a visual on the target.

YOU DON'T KNOW DIFFICULT.

As the pilot of an UH-1Y "Venom," Jason Caster has transported troops to and from the battlefield, engaged in combat while supporting U.S. ground forces and inserted sniper teams into the mountains.

"Pretty much anything you can think of I have had the privilege of doing during combat missions," says the veteran of 8½ years in the Marine Corps.

In terms of difficultly, however, those may pale in comparison to Hero Flights, which are gut-wrenching missions in which fallen heroes are extracted from war zones.

"I have flown out Marines who were killed on the battlefield and brought them home," says the 31-year-old native of Brookings, Oregon. "That is a humbling experience, but I am not sure that is the best word [to describe it]. Those are difficult flights, but I am glad to pay them the respect they deserve so we can bring them home."

When a brother perishes in duty, a driving emotion gnaws at Caster.

"There are just times when I wish I could have done more, even if I could not have," says Caster. "You take a certain ownership into every life that is lost, and it is tough to feel like you could have done more, even if you could not have. It becomes personal. You don't want to let the guys down just like they don't want to let the guy down next to them."

The bond that develops between these men is as powerful as the weaponry they use to fight for our freedom.

COMBAT READY THE UH-1Y

The UH-1Y's integrated glass cockpit is optimized for crew coordination and situational awareness during high-tempo combat operations. The Optimized Top Owl helmet-mounted sight and display provides pilots with all essential aircraft performance, navigation and weapons information for mission accomplishment.

All UH-1Ys are outfitted with the 3rd generation BRITE Star Block II FLIR and color television camera to provide robust navigation and long-range targeting capabilities. The sensor is outfitted with a laser designator/rangefinder and integrated infrared pointer to take full advantage of its 2.75-inch rockets or a selection of 7.62 and .50 caliber guns.

ULTIMATE TACTICAL HELICOPTER

THE BELL UH-1Y CAN ENGAGE THREATS, DELIVER OR EXTRICATE PERSONNEL AND PERFORM UNDER THE MOST PUNISHING OPERATING CONDITIONS, MAKING IT THE ULTIMATE TACTICAL UTILITY HELICOPTER.

Eric Hamer adjusts his microphone en route to the mission zone.

SURVIVABILITY

The UH-1Y was designed with survivability in mind, knowing it would be regularly tasked with conducting Close Air Support (CAS), Armed Reconnaissance, Forward Air Control (Airborne), and escort and insert/extract missions. A number of enhancements on these aircraft include:

- Ballistically tolerant composite rotor hubs and blades capable of withstanding 23mm munitions
- Large diameter control tubes for survivability against small arms
- Landing gear rated for 12 feet per second descent
- On Board Inert Gas Generating System (OBIGGS) for fuel tank ullage
- Engine infrared (IR) suppressors and IR reflective paint
- Pilot, aircrew and passenger crash attenuating seats

The aircraft are also outfitted with a robust, combat-tested suite of threat detection and countermeasure equipment:

- AN/APR-39B(V)2 Radar Warning System
- AN/AAR-47 Missile/Laser Warning System
- AN/ALE-47 Countermeasure Dispensing Set

"To be honest, recognition for fighting for our country is nice, but I do it for the other guy in uniform," he says. "Most [who serve] feel a sense of duty and want to protect their family and serve people at home or whatever their reason might be. When I am involved in a mission, however, I am not thinking about that. I am thinking about the guy on the ground who needs support. These are the guys who raised their hands and put themselves in harm's way. I am doing it for that guy so he can make it home to his family."

Combined, the risks and rewards create a life unlike anyone could ever imagine.

"It is absolutely fun to fly," says Caster. "Truly, aside from time with my family, it is the most enjoyable thing I do. In the air, you are your own person up there. There are no handcuffs of being on the ground, and you can do some amazing things while flying."

Like preserving our freedom.

MISSIONS

As the Marine Corps' premier utility helicopter, the UH-1Y is tasked with conducting the following missions:

- **Combat assault transport**
- **Air delivery**
- **Airborne command and control**
- **Helicopter insert and extract/fastrope**
- **Tactical air control (Airborne)**

Prior to turning east, the Huey flew over the Pacific Ocean.

A view of the instrument panel.

"THE INTRODUCTION OF THE AH-1Z AND THE UH-1Y PROVIDES THE MARINE CORPS WITH THE MOST ADVANCED ATTACK AND UTILITY HELICOPTERS IN THE WORLD. THEY REPRESENT THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT MEANS OF ACCOMPLISHING A WIDE ARRAY OF MISSIONS, IN ANY LOCATION AND ARE A FORCE MULTIPLIER FOR THE GROUND FORCE COMMANDER." — JAMES F. AMOS, GENERAL, U.S. MARINE CORPS

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Specs

Performance: Huey
Maximum Speed: 170
Cruise Speed: 147
Sidebar/Rearward Flight: 45
Max Autorotation Speed: 120
Combat Radius: 119 nm
Maneuverability: -0.5 to +2.3 g

Weight and Fuel
Max Gross Weight: 18,500
Fuel Capacity (Gallons): 388

Engines
Model: T700-GE-401C
Output, Uninstalled,
Each Engine: 1800 shp

Crew
Pilots: 2
Crew/Passenger Seats: 2/8

An AH-1Z "Viper" accompanied the Huey on the mission.

BRITE STAR

To optimize mission performance, the UH-1Y's BRITE Star II employs a five fields of view, midwave, forward looking infrared (FLIR) sensor and a 3-FOV, high definition, three chip, color and monochrome Charged Couple Device camera.

Its ability to fuse the infrared and CCD images affords detection, recognition and identification at greater distances, enabling crews to find, fix and engaged targets beyond the range of threats in day and night conditions.

GEARED UP

- Flight suit
- Flight boots
- A flight vest that has a place for bullet protection when in combat
- First aid gear
- Flight gloves
- The flight helmets do not provide bullet-proof protection; instead, they provide a certain amount of protection from injury
- A backpack with food, water and maps
- An M9 and M4 service rifle

THE FUTURE OF THE UH-1Y

Some of the capability enhancements planned for the Yankee (Viper) and Zulu (Huey) include:

- **DIGITALLY AIDED CLOSE AIR SUPPORT**

DaCAS enables the digital exchange of Close Air Support mission information to increase aircrew situational awareness and accelerate the kill chain.

- **COMMON DATA LINK**

The Yankee and Zulu will be outfitted with the ability to send and receive Full Motion Video with associated meta-data to and from UAS and ground-based systems to validate targeting accuracy, maintain positive identification, reduce potential for collateral damage and decrease risk of fratricide.

- **JOINT BATTLE COMMAND**

JBC-P is the next iteration of Blue Force Tracker (BFT), providing secure Common Operational Picture and over-the-horizon data link capability to aircrews operating throughout the battlespace.

- **JOINT ALLIED THREAT AWARENESS SYSTEM**

JATAS extends infrared and laser threat detection and adds Hostile Fire Indicator capability for AH-1Z and UH-1Y aircraft.

DID YOU KNOW?

The H-1 program is comprised of the AH-1Z "Viper" and the UH-1Y "Venom." The aircraft are the "most capable attack and utility helicopters around the glove," the USMC says.

WEAPONS/PAYLOAD CONFIGURATIONS

The UH-1Y is reconfigurable to support a wide variety of tasks with the following armament and mission kits:

- GAU-21 Common Defense Weapon System (.50 cal)
- GAU-17 mini-gun (7.62mm)
- M240 gun (7.62mm)
- MK-2.75" rockets
- Tactical Aircrew Combat Training System (TACTS) pod
- 77-gallon fuel tank
- Fast rope gantries
- External cargo hook

INSIDE THE COCKPIT

The UH-1Y Integrated Avionics System (IAS) interfaces the helicopters' glass cockpits and provides the capability for the helicopter to communicate, navigate, process and present data; manage crew station systems; detect and counter threats; acquire and track targets; employ guided and unguided munitions; and provide various sensor input data with other aircraft systems and equipment.

The IAS utilizes two synchronized mission computers with an open, modular architecture that allows for easy system upgrades and is aligned with Edition 1.0 of the Future Airborne Capability Environment (FACE) Technical Standard. The IAS also improves the aircrew's situational awareness and weapons accuracy by providing critical mission data on four multi-function displays. FP

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PROSECUTOR OF TARGETS AH-1Z VIPER

PHOTO BY GUS ALONZO

We could talk about the Cobra's formidable weapons/payload configuration, or we could simply direct your attention to the seven-letter word emblazoned on the Viper, which tells you right away how badass this bird and its crew are.

From about 100 feet away, shooter Gus Alonzo captured this AH-1Z as it returned to Camp Pendleton from a training mission.

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* Some rifles may not be available in all states and locales due to laws limiting magazine capacity and feature-based restrictions. Please check with your local law enforcement agency prior to purchasing to verify that it may legally be purchased and/or possessed in your particular state and locale.

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